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Thursday, September 29, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 29, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS CALENDAR

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 28(2)(b), it is my duty to lay upon the table the revised House of Commons calendar for the year 2023.

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[*Translation*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 40(1) of the Privacy Act and subsection 25(1) of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, the Privacy Commissioner's report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

(Bill C-29: On the Order: Government Orders)

September 28, 2022—the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations—Second Reading of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the motion for second reading of Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, be deemed adopted on division, deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay. It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from constituents and others who are extremely concerned about the climate emergency. They note that the House carried a motion that we are in a climate emergency, in June 2018. Constituents note that this requires that we act as if we are in an emergency, something that has not happened yet.

The petitioners call on Canada to address the climate emergency by reducing emissions by at least 60% below 2005 levels by 2030; making substantial contributions to assist the developing world or, as the petition refers to, countries in the global south; winding down the fossil fuel industry in such a way that ensures workers and communities are protected from any economic dislocation; providing good green jobs and an inclusive workforce; strengthening human rights and worker rights; expanding the social safety net to ensure decarbonized public housing and operational funding for affordable and accessible public transit nationwide; and paying for the transition by increasing taxes on the wealthiest and big oil and financing through a public national bank.

* * *

• (1005)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MORATORIUM ON NEW TAXES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved:

That, given that the cost of government is driving up inflation, making the price of goods Canadians buy and the interest they pay unaffordable, this House call on the government to commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and pay cheques.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this very important and timely motion.

The government's economic policy can be summed up in four simple words: smaller paycheques, higher prices. The cost of government is driving up the cost of living. What do the Conservatives mean when we say that? If we look at why prices are rising, it is directly linked to the massive deficits the Prime Minister has been racking up pretty much since his first day in office. In its first year in power, the government made a conscious decision to spend more money than it received and plunge this country into those deficits. That weakened our economy before the pandemic.

It is fair to say that nobody could have seen the COVID pandemic coming, but it is also prudent for a government to predict that the unknown could occur. We might not have known that it was going to be this crisis, but governments must be prepared for any number of world or global events that it might be forced to respond to. Plunging the country into those deficits when times were good was therefore a foolish thing to do. Obviously, in retrospect, it was massively unhelpful, as our country had to deal with the COVID pandemic from a weakened position because of the government's policies.

I know so many of my colleagues want to speak to this very important motion, because it is affecting people's lives in such a real and practical way, so I will be splitting my time this morning to allow for more members to participate in this debate.

How did the government's deficits lead to that higher spending? Well, the government had to go out and borrow a bunch of money that it did not have, so it turned to the Bank of Canada, and the Bank of Canada made a decision to underwrite the government's deficit spending by purchasing government bonds, or IOUs. When a government has to borrow money, it writes a promise to pay the money back. That is called a bond. Normally, individuals or institutions can buy those bonds and expect to get paid the interest, and the government pays the bond back at the end of the term. However, the Bank of Canada did something a little different: It created new money right out of thin air to buy those government bonds.

It started creating five billion dollars in new currency every single week, starting in March 2020, to buy those government bonds. That new money, not backed up by new production, not backed up by economic growth and not backed up by any extra production of goods or services, washed through the system.

There could be big winners when the government creates money out of thin air. The big winners are the large financial institutions that get the money first, because they go out and gobble up assets.

They buy property and commodities. They do that with the new money before everybody realizes there is a whole new influx of currency in the system. When everybody else gets that money when it eventually makes its way through the economy, prices start to go up. Those large financial institutions and wealthy investors can then sell those commodities and make money on the difference. That is why prices have gone up, and it is also why we have seen record profits at large financial institutions like the big banks.

That is why we say that the cost of government has driven up the cost of living. Literally, the government's extra spending, wasteful spending, forced the Bank of Canada to underwrite those deficits, creating that new money and causing prices to rise. That is the higher prices.

What about the smaller paycheques? Well, what the government is planning to do on January 1 is take a bigger bite out of Canadians' paycheques with an increase in paycheque taxes. Canadians are going to be forced to pay more right off the top on their paycheques, and the government is going to take part of the extra tax it collects, scoop it out of the EI fund and spend it.

We know this. We know the government's plan for the EI increase is simply going to be gobbled up by regular government spending. In fact, the extra premiums the government will collect will put the EI fund into a \$10-billion surplus over the short term, and all of that will be taken by the Prime Minister to finance his pet spending projects.

● (1010)

Where is a big chunk of that extra money going? It is going to the interest on our national debt. The Prime Minister has racked up more debt than every single other prime minister combined, and the PBO report indicates that just the interest on our national debt, which Canadian taxpayers will be forced to pay, will double. Soon, the portion of our tax dollars that go to pay just the interest on that national debt will be higher than the amount that is spent on the Canadian Armed Forces. That is the scale we are talking about.

What is the result? Well, we have all heard the heart-wrenching stories in our ridings. We have all heard from the seniors who have had to delay their retirement and watch their life savings evaporate with inflation. Thirty year-olds are trapped in tiny, 400-square-foot apartments in our large cities or, even worse, are still living in their parents' basement because the price of homes has doubled under the Liberals. Single mothers are putting water in their children's milk so they can afford the 10% year-over-year increase in the price of groceries.

Business of Supply

It is no wonder that people are worried. Most are lucky just to get by, but so many are falling far behind. There are people in this country who are just barely hanging on. These are our friends and neighbours, and we in the House are their servants. It is up to us to take real action to address this Liberal-caused inflation crisis.

The Conservatives are bringing forward very simple and practical solutions to help Canadians across the country. Today, the Conservatives are calling on the government to not make the situation worse. The Liberals have already done damage with higher prices. They do not need to shrink Canadians' paycheques, which is what this government is planning to do. Not only are they adding inflationary fuel on the fire with their continued plans to increase spending, but they are reducing Canadians' ability to cope with the government-caused inflation by shrinking those paycheques.

A new poll out today is just jaw-dropping: 90% of Canadians are tightening their household budgets due to inflation. Almost half, or 46%, say they are worse off now than they were at the same time last year when it comes to their own finances, which represents a 12-year high. Over half say that it is difficult to feed their household, and this number rises to seven in 10, or 68%, among those with household incomes below \$50,000. Canadians cannot keep up.

As for grocery prices, I have five children and our grocery bill is big enough as it is with a few teenagers in the house. Those prices have skyrocketed, up over 10% and rising at the fastest pace in 40 years. With inflationary pressures at this rate, the government's supports do not even help the problem but contribute to it, as that extra spending is added to the amount of money the government needs to borrow, which is causing that vicious circle of higher inflation.

The average Canadian family now spends more of its income on taxes than it does on basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothing combined. By comparison, 33.5% of the average family's income went to pay taxes in 1961. Thirty-three per cent of income in 1961 went to taxes and now that number is 43%, so more is spent on taxes than food, shelter and clothing combined. It is simply jaw-dropping.

On Tuesday, the Conservatives proposed that the government should cancel its plan to triple the carbon tax. The cost of everything is set to skyrocket as the government triples the amount that it charges Canadians on home heating and fuel, with all the effects that has on literally everything else that Canadians have to buy. Groceries, lumber and household items all go up when the government raises the carbon tax by 300%.

Today, we have another practical solution: The government should get its hands off Canadians' paycheques and let Canadians keep more of their hard-earned dollars. It has already robbed Canadians of the purchasing power that they are already earning, and their existing paycheques are already devalued because of the government's inflationary policies. It is never a good time to raise taxes, but the absolute worst time to raise taxes on Canadians' paycheques is when they are already struggling so hard to get by with day-to-day goods.

I hope every member of the House supports this common-sense, practical motion to stop the government's tax hikes on Canadians' paycheques.

• (1015)

The Speaker: Before going to questions and comments, I just want to clarify with the hon. member that he said he was going to split his time.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I still will.

The Speaker: I thank the member. I wanted to make sure that was on the record.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly amazing. The difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals is that the Liberal government recognizes the importance of developing and encouraging an economy that works for all Canadians. The Conservatives, on the other hand, have a policy one day and then will flip to another policy the next day.

If we think about it, let us talk about inflation. Canada, in comparison to other countries around the world, is doing exceptionally well. We can look at the U.S., look at Europe and look at England.

It does not mean we ignore the issue. In fact, we brought forward Bill C-30. Bill C-30 ensures that individuals will get an enhanced GST rebate. Originally the Conservatives said no. Now they have had a flip-flop and are supporting this Liberal initiative. The more time they give this government, the more they will find they like the policies. After all, they criticize the deficit, but they voted for billions and billions of those dollars that are going toward the deficit. They voted in favour of it.

Why should Canadians believe a party that does not understand basic economic principles? All one needs to do is to look at the silly idea of cryptocurrency that was being advanced by today's Conservative leader, where thousands of Canadians lost a great deal of money because of the lack of wisdom in his words.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, there we have it. The Liberal message to Canadians is to thank their lucky stars it is not even worse. It is a bit like an arsonist saying to a homeowner, "Well, I know I set your house on fire, but look, your neighbour's house is even more on fire."

I do not think a single Canadian is going to be reassured by that message. When it comes to what this party has supported, we have always supported tax relief for Canadians. We certainly did not vote in favour of the government's wasteful and corrupt spending, such as when it sent \$1 billion to its friends at the WE organization or when it gave \$35 billion to an Infrastructure Bank that has turned into a corporate welfare machine and has not got a single project built.

Business of Supply

On this side of the House, we recognize that when Canadians work so hard for their paycheques, they should be able to keep as much of it as possible. That is why we are so focused on this measure. The government should cancel the upcoming paycheque tax hikes so that Canadians can keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear from the Leader of the Opposition. The Conservatives keep coming back to the same issue, one that is very important. No one is denying that. However, it seems to me that there is a lack of constructive solutions.

Would my colleague be open to increasing benefits for seniors on fixed incomes? The Bloc Québécois has been trying to hammer home this point for several months in Parliament and the government has not responded. Given inflation rates, which are particularly affecting food prices, we should help seniors by increasing the old age security pension. The agricultural community also needs more support, considering that the cost of gasoline has increased.

I would like to hear some constructive comments from my colleague.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the motion we are debating today proposes a concrete measure to help Canadians.

[English]

Today's measure is a concrete proposal. It is a very simple, straightforward proposal to help Canadians deal with the Liberal-caused inflation. It will allow them to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. The government is devaluing the dollars they are earning, so the very least it can do is to let Canadians keep more of the dollars they have worked so hard for in the first place.

We have to get back to the root cause. It will do Canadians and seniors no good to increase something with the left hand, but with the right hand take away all of that benefit with rising prices. As long as the government continues its vicious circle of increased spending and the borrowing that goes along with it, we will continue to have inflation. It will just make the problem worse. That is why we have to tackle the root cause of inflation.

I should point out that for several months we have had 8% inflation in this country. It is back to school time and I have been helping my daughters with their math, and 8%, I figured out, is just about one-twelfth. That is as if one were to go buy a case of beer, open up the first one and just dump it right down the drain. It just evaporates, or it is like working all month, day in and day out, and at the end of that month one finds out one worked for nothing. That is the effect of 8% inflation. Canadians are tired of working one month out of the year for nothing. The very least the government can do is to let them keep what they have earned the other 11 months.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my father has worked very hard ever since he immigrated to this country. He has worked in sawmills and in coal mines in Alberta and B.C., and to this day he continues to drive a taxi, because he just cannot stay at home, so he would rather go out and work. He has always said that in Canada, if people work, they can pay their

bills and provide for their families, and if they work hard, they can buy really nice things, too. That is the reason so many people, like my father and many others, have come to this country. They came to Canada for the opportunities and to be able to provide for their families.

However, the Liberal government has created a Canada that many Canadians struggle to recognize now, where working hard no longer means people will be able to pay for fuel, heat their homes or even own a home at all. Affordability is a top concern for Canadians across the country. When asked in a recent survey what issues we should focus on during this parliamentary session, almost every response listed the cost of living as a top concern.

Now in Canada we have college students living in homeless shelters, single mothers who cannot afford to buy nutritious food for their children, and seniors turning to food banks as a last resort. Even in recent reports, those same food banks are saying that they are struggling to even stay open, that they do not have enough food to provide to those who show up for help and support.

We have a generation of young Canadians living in their parents' basements without the hope of ever moving out. Young families who were once saving up for a down payment are now having to use that down payment to buy groceries and pay for gas. Grandparents watch as their adult children struggle to provide for their own children, despite having jobs. There is much pain and struggle among Canadians. They did everything we asked them to do, yet the government is failing them.

When the Prime Minister took office, Canadians were paying 32% of their income, on average, to maintain a mid-size house. Now the average family has to pay 50% of its income just to keep that house. Canadians are putting themselves in debt to cover their basic expenses and repaying this borrowed money at an unpredictable and growing interest rate. The government told Canadians that rates would remain low for a long time, but now we can see interest rates rising every few months and Canadians just cannot keep up. Instead of providing relief to Canadians, the government is increasing taxes on those who are already struggling.

I have heard from many people across my riding, single mothers, small business owners and families in Edmonton Mill Woods, who cannot afford the government's spending agenda, a spending agenda that the government itself cannot afford. As one constituent said to me, we need a government that works for Canadians, not the other way around. I could not agree more.

My riding of Edmonton Mill Woods is very much a multicultural community. Many immigrants have come to this beautiful place to make their lives here. I know many hard-working immigrant families that work long hours, trying to provide a good life for their children, but still fall short of meeting the inflationary demands created by the government.

A constituent of mine, Abdul, is a local business owner and a new immigrant from Nigeria. Like most small business owners, he works a lot more than the usual eight hours per day. This is a person who is driven, hard-working and passionate about his business, yet he struggles to make ends meet. He confided in me that he cannot afford to put his children in hockey or put his daughter in dance. Unlike the government, he cannot spend money he does not have.

Kim, another constituent, is a single mother and the sole provider for her children. She continues to struggle to afford to put gas in her car in order just to get to her job. Unlike the government, she has to save up money in order to spend it on her children. She had to save up just to buy school supplies this year, which, of course, cost more because of the government-created inflation crisis right now. I believe single mothers like Kim and many other Canadians have something to teach the government. It must find a dollar to spend a dollar. It must have the money to spend the money.

• (1025)

Now the government is making things worse for Canadians. The government must scrap its planned tax hikes on Canadian families and Canadian businesses. Canadians cannot keep up with this out-of-control spending, which is driving interest rates and inflation. Instead of just printing more money, we need to produce more things we can buy. We need to produce affordable food, energy and natural resources right here in Canada.

Our farmers are the best in the world. By removing the barriers the government has placed on them, we would increase our food production and make food more affordable. We must scrap these taxes on farmers, scrap the government's plan to reduce the use of fertilizer, and eliminate even the red tape that makes it more expensive for farmers. Let our farmers do what they do best, which is to grow our food.

In fact, if the government would just get out of way, farmers would not only be able to provide more food for Canadians, but could also help in this looming food shortage crisis around the world.

I would also suggest the government go out and speak to Canadians and hear from them. I suggest the government speak to my constituents and other constituents across the country about what is actually happening to them, their families and their businesses. I recently sat down with a group of truckers, and I was astonished to hear that some trucking companies are actually finding it cheaper and saving money by parking their trucks. Diesel and the cost of paying for and finding a driver have become so expensive that they are saving money by not working.

We must ensure Canadians keep more of their paycheques in their pockets and that energy, gas, heating and other costs become more affordable. Instead of importing foreign energy, we must get

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rid of laws like the ones arising out of Bill C-69 and allow energy to be produced here in Canada. Bill C-69 itself was a major roadblock for bringing new investments and projects into Canada.

Canada currently imports over 130,000 barrels of overseas oil daily, mostly from dictator countries. This is despite the fact we have the third-largest supply of energy right here in Canada, with much of it in Alberta. That is all because the government prefers dirty dictator oil to responsible Canadian energy.

We will repeal the government's anti-energy laws and replace them with laws that protect our environment, consult our first nations and actually get projects done. That will mean more jobs for Canadians and more ethical Canadian energy for the world. This will also help the value of our dollar.

It is never the right time to raise taxes on working Canadians, yet that is exactly what the government is doing. We continue to call on the government to cancel all planned tax hikes, including payroll taxes planned for January 1 and tax hikes on gas, groceries and home heating on April 1. I hope the government and all other members of the House will support our motion today.

• (1030)

The Speaker: I ask hon. members to be as concise as possible. There is a lot of interest in getting a question out there, and we want to make sure everyone gets the chance.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be concise.

This member said "instead of providing relief" as part of his comments today. All this government has been doing is looking for solutions to provide relief for Canadians. Look at the GST rebate, the assistance with rent, and the dental care for children under 12 that has been established. These are all measures the federal government is putting in place to help provide some of that relief.

More importantly, as it relates to the GST rebate we introduced, I understand now the Conservatives are going to vote in favour of it, which is great. Since they have made that position clear, will the Conservatives let us vote on that, or will they insist on letting every member speak and then put forward an amendment and then have another round of everybody speaking just for no purpose other than to jam up the political process in here? Will they let us get that GST rebate out to Canadians who need it right now?

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Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, I would not exactly call that concise, but I think there was a question in there somewhere.

As for helping Canadians, it was the Liberal government that caused all of these problems. It is the government that has caused this inflation and caused the cost of everything to go up, and now it is providing some things it is calling solutions. In fact, some of its so-called solutions will actually add to inflation and to those problems, and they are just temporary.

The fact of the matter is that anything the government provides now, whatever it is proposing, will actually be completely wiped out by the cost of everything and wiped out even more by its increased tax hikes. On January 1 and on April 1, the cost of everything is going to go up for Canadians. That will completely wipe out everything it has said it is trying to provide. It is not helping. It caused this problem and it is not helping now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it really is Groundhog Day here in Parliament. It seems as if we are talking about the same issue we discussed last Tuesday.

It is true that prices are going up. Let us talk about housing, for example. This week, the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association came to the Hill to meet with us. They told us something pretty interesting that predates the pandemic and the recent increase in inflation.

Over the last 10 years in Canada, 600,000 affordable housing units have been lost. These are units the government had paid for, that we had all paid for, and that were relatively affordable. They were moved to the private market.

The government boasts about having a national housing strategy in which it is investing \$72 billion, supposedly to create affordable housing, but that money has been lost. Private developers are buying up the units and flipping them at higher prices.

This is a major crisis that requires major investment. What do the Conservatives have to offer?

[*English*]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my hon. colleague that the government's programs on housing have not been working. Day in and day out, we have been asking the government about affordable housing and their solution has always been to say, "We have spent so much money on it. We spent millions of dollars on this program, millions and millions of dollars on this program," but the results have not been there. It is not working.

What we have said is that we need to increase supply. If there is a demand problem, we need to be able to figure out solutions to increase supply, something they are not doing. If we increase supply, that would actually fix the system. If we were to work with municipalities, work with the provinces and encourage municipalities, especially those gatekeepers who are very slow and not allowing building permits to go through, and if we could increase that supply and use more of the abundant land that we have in Canada to provide housing for Canadians, that would actually create more affordable housing.

• (1035)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with my colleague more when he raised that we could be spending today talking about more important issues. Here we are, on the eve of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. What do we hear from the Conservatives? We have a rerun of Tuesday. We had the House leader of the official opposition talking about beer.

What are they doing today? They are spending time, and every day this week, delaying getting help to people.

Does my colleague not believe that, today, we should be spending the day talking about the pressing issues that are facing indigenous peoples in this country, putting pressure on the government to fulfill their commitment on the truth and reconciliation calls to action and on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls calls to justice? Why are they not spending today doing that? Why are we not spending this day doing that, today, right now?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Mr. Speaker, we are spending the day talking about important issues. We are talking about making life more affordable for all Canadians, including indigenous communities, new Canadians and Canadians who have been here for generations, because this crisis has gotten to a point where Canadians just cannot go on. On top of that, now, the Liberal government is going to make things even more unaffordable.

When we talk to our constituents and they say that they are having a hard time providing food for their families, that they are struggling to even support their families, that is a national crisis that we must deal with. We will continue to discuss this. We will continue to put pressure on the government until they stop increasing taxes on Canadians.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here to discuss this topic. I will be sharing my time with the member for Milton.

We are seeing higher inflation rates and a higher cost of living in Canada, and frankly right around the world, as a result of many factors. They include the war on Ukraine, global supply chain bottlenecks, in large part due to the pandemic, and global energy market uncertainty. Inflation is actually less severe here in Canada at 7% than among many of our peers. The United States is at 8.3% and the United Kingdom is at 9.9%. The euro area and the OECD also have higher inflation.

While inflation in Canada has continued to ease from its peak in June, we know that Canadians continue to be worried about the higher cost of living. They are asking what their government is doing about it and what we are going to continue to do to make life more affordable and to grow an economy that works for everyone.

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While inflation is not a unique Canadian problem, we are uniquely positioned to deal with it. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We have a AAA credit rating and, according to the International Monetary Fund, Canada will have the fastest-growing economy in the G7 this year and next year. This means we can build a comprehensive affordability plan for Canadians while continuing to reduce our debt-to-GDP ratio, and that is exactly what we are doing.

In terms of what this means for Canadians, our plan will help make life more affordable through measures like doubling the GST credit for six months, which will provide \$2.5 billion in additional targeted support this year to roughly 11 million individuals and families who already receive the tax credit, including more than half of Canadian seniors. I am, in fact, very happy that the Conservative Party is now supporting this measure.

We are going to enhance the Canada workers benefit to put up to an additional \$2,400 into the pockets of low-income working families. We are increasing old age security for seniors over 75, which increases benefits for more than three million seniors and provides more than \$800 in the first year for full pensioners.

This year, a \$500 payment will be made to 1.8 million Canadian low-income renters. We will cut child care fees by an average of 50% by the end of this year. Dental care for Canadians without dental insurance who earn less than \$90,000 will be available for hundreds of thousands of children under the age of 12 for the first time in Canadian history.

We will continue to index to inflation some of Canada's most important programs, including the Canada child benefit, the GST credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. Simply put, our plan is putting more money in the pockets of Canadians when they need it the most. This includes our lowest-paid workers, low-income renters and families who cannot afford to take their kids to the dentist.

We know that the right fiscal path does not have us compensating every single Canadian for rising costs driven by a global pandemic and by an illegal war on Ukraine. To do so would only make inflation worse. Canadians understand that too. We are instead targeting supports to the Canadians who are the most disproportionately impacted by the effects of inflation.

Our government will also ensure our economy is growing, that our businesses have the workers they need and that Canadians can continue to find good-paying and rewarding jobs. We will do this while continuing our strong fiscal track record and not further fuelling the inflationary fire.

Let us be absolutely clear: This suite of measures that comprise our affordability plan will support Canadians without increasing inflation. This, of course, undercuts the Leader of the Opposition's motion, what his House leader has already said today and specifically runs counter to the claim that the government is driving up inflation.

Many economists, including the former deputy parliamentary budget officer, the University of Calgary's Lindsay Tedds and Alberta economist Trevor Tombe, have all agreed that this support package for Canadians is not inflationary. In fact, because our in-

cremental investments only represent 0.1% of our GDP, even the current Parliamentary Budget Officer has stated that the impact on inflation would be neither significant nor measurable.

It is great to see that Conservatives have started to backtrack on their previous positions against getting support to Canadians and are now supporting the GST tax credit. It is time for them to support the housing benefit and dental care as well.

● (1040)

Let me take some time to discuss the Canada pension plan and the employment insurance system. At this time of global economic uncertainty, it is the height of irresponsibility for the Conservatives to suggest that we as a country stop putting money away for retirement and employment insurance. Cutting contributions will mean lower pensions for seniors at a time when they will need it most. Raiding pensions is a regular strategy for the Conservative Party, and this policy is similar to when they raised the age of retirement eligibility from 65 to 67. That took thousands of dollars away from seniors, and we should not let them do it again.

With respect to employment insurance, when we were elected in 2015, the EI premium rate was \$1.88. Funny enough, the current Leader of the Opposition was the minister in charge of the file at the time. Today, the EI rate is \$1.58, which is 30¢ lower. Next year it will go up to \$1.63, which is still 25¢ lower than it was in 2015, when the Leader of the Opposition had full control of the file. I am certain this clarifies the issue for Canadians.

By the way, going after the pensions of Canadians is not just, resolutely, a poor economic and social decision, but a little misguided as well. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition knows that making changes to the Canada pension plan requires legislation and agreements from seven out of 10 provinces. If he truly wants to govern, he should think long and hard before he gets into a fight with the 13 provinces and territories over reducing the hard-earned pension plans of our fellow Canadians.

Let us turn to fighting climate change and our national price on pollution.

Business of Supply

First, fighting climate change is an absolute necessity for the future of our planet. Let us also acknowledge that the effects of climate change are an inflationary pressure on our economy. It is well known that having a national price on pollution is a highly effective market mechanism for reducing greenhouse gas emissions while making life more affordable for the majority of Canadians. Throughout all the debates in this session, the Conservatives have tried to correlate the massive increase in the price of gas with the federal carbon price, and it is simply not true. In 2019, the carbon price was approximately 9¢ per litre in British Columbia, my home province. Today, it is 11¢ per litre. That means that although gas prices have increased by more than a dollar per litre, only 2¢ of that increase can be attributed to the price on pollution in British Columbia over the last three years.

Further, because the carbon price in British Columbia is provincially administered, if the federal carbon price was eliminated, as the Conservatives are regularly suggesting, this would result in zero savings for residents in British Columbia. Instead, it would simply mean that other jurisdictions, other provinces, would do less to fight climate change.

Also worth noting is that, with the climate action incentive, carbon pricing actually makes life more affordable for 80% of Canadian households, something the Conservatives always seem to forget when they talk about the subject.

I hope that all members opposite will share this information with their colleagues and convince their caucus to go back to supporting carbon pricing as they did less than 12 months ago.

I believe I have now fully addressed every point within today's motion. It is clear that our government continues to have a fiscally responsible plan to help make life more affordable and to grow an economy that works for everyone.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have risen in the House several times this week to talk about measures that might seem worthwhile in the short-term because they provide some relief for taxpayers. Today's motion might seem useful because it talks about lowering taxes. No one can be against apple pie.

However, we are in the midst of an inflationary period. As I used to teach my high school students, inflation is caused by a myriad of factors, such as supply issues, natural disasters that destroy areas that produce food and other goods, a labour shortage and so on.

I am trying to understand what medium- and long-term solutions the government and the opposition parties envision. What kinds of solutions will truly help us reduce inflation without draining our coffers? As I taught my high school students, inflation is followed by a recession, and that is when we will need money in the coffers.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I am happy the member works to educate her students on inflation and its many causes.

There tends to be a disagreement between the government and especially the Conservatives, and there is a lot of cross-talk over

what is causing inflation. The member is right that things like climate change and natural disasters can cause inflation. The war in Ukraine is certainly putting inflationary pressure on global economies, as are the leftover remnants of the effects of the pandemic, where we have supply bottlenecks, which are global as well.

The opposition wants to make the thesis that it is solely the Government of Canada that is driving inflation, but that is a hard thesis to prove. There is no way that the fiscal policies of Canada are affecting inflation in Europe, the OECD or in the United States.

In the short term, we are going to make life more affordable for Canadians and helping to grow an economy that works for everyone. In the long term, we will use both our fiscal tools and the independent Bank of Canada's monetary tools to get inflation under control.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have been hearing a lot lately from seniors in northwest B.C. is how difficult it is to make ends meet on a fixed income, how their pensions, old age security is insufficient to cover the basic costs of living.

So many people have asked me when their public pension will increase to the point where they can afford the basics, where they can have the dignity of being able to pay for rent, medication and the things that so many of us take for granted.

Could the parliamentary secretary outline his government's plans, if indeed it has them, to finally increase the public pensions to a point where people can have the dignity of a basic income to pay for the things they need?

● (1050)

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, in the short term, with respect to supports for pensioners, we are increasing OAS for seniors 75 and over by 10%, so seniors can expect an additional \$815 in benefits. We have reduced the retirement age from 67 to 65. Seniors over 75 received a one-time payment of \$500 over the summer.

I am happy to report to the House that our policies are working, because 25% fewer seniors live in poverty today than when we took office in 2015. Through working with the provinces and territories, our government has established a plan where future retirees will see significantly more benefits when it comes time to retire, as long as we do not let the Conservatives take those benefits away from them.

Business of Supply

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about promises and commitments. I would ask him about a campaign commitment that his government made during the last campaign to never raise the carbon tax past \$50. Now we see that it will go up to maybe \$170 a tonne.

The member talked about some of the commitments we made in the last campaign. I am wondering how he feels about making a commitment on the doorsteps of his constituents and then not following through on that. They are seeing the price of everything go up because of the ever-increasing carbon tax.

I would like to hear the member's comments on not fulfilling the promise he made to the people who sent him here.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I would refer Canadians to the content of my speech. If I could refer back to my experience in British Columbia, we have had a price on pollution since 2008. We have had the fastest growing economy in the country. Our plan actually makes life more affordable for 80% of Canadian households.

It is a good plan that fights climate change and grows the economy at the same time.

[Translation]

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here today with my friends and colleagues to speak to the very important issue of making life more affordable for all Canadians.

[English]

I am pleased to contribute to the debate today on this motion. Making life more affordable for Canadians is a key priority for our government, and I would like to highlight some of the measures that we are taking to address the cost of living.

The pandemic has been, we hope, a once-in-a-lifetime and generation crisis. However, like any major crisis, this has aftershocks and inflation is chief among those aftershocks.

Inflation has made the cost of living into a real struggle for a lot of Canadians and for many of my constituents in Milton, especially the most vulnerable. We understand that our neighbours are going through many tough times right now and these measures are designed to address some of those.

This is not a made-in-Canada challenge. Inflation is affecting people around the world. We are fortunate to recognize that inflation is not as bad here as it is in some other places, but we do have made-in-Canada solutions for the impact that our neighbours are feeling.

Over all, the government's affordability plan is delivering targeted and fiscally responsible financial support for the Canadians who need it most, with particular emphasis on addressing the needs of low-income Canadians who are exposed to inflation.

The government's affordability plan includes an enhanced Canada workers' benefit that will put up to \$2,400 more into the pockets of low-income families. There is a 10% increase in old age security for seniors 75 and over, which will provide more than \$800 in new supports to full pensioners over the first year and increase

benefits for more than three million seniors in Canada. The main support programs, including the Canada child benefit, the GST benefit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are all indexed to inflation and they will be increasing.

Last week, meeting a commitment made earlier this year, the government tabled two important pieces of legislation in Parliament. The bills represent the latest suites of measures to support Canadians with the rising costs of living without adding fuel to the fire of inflation. Bill C-30 would double the goods and services tax credit for six months. Bill C-31 would enact two important measures: the Canada dental benefit and a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit.

Doubling the GST credit will provide \$2.5 billion in additional targeted support to the roughly 11 million Canadians and families that already receive that tax credit. That includes about nine million single people and almost two million couples, and more than half of Canadian seniors as well. Single Canadians without children will receive an extra \$234 and couples with two children will receive an additional \$467 this year. Seniors will receive, on average, an extra \$225.

The next important measure is the Canada dental benefit, which will be provided to eligible Canadian families with children under 12 who do not already have access to dental insurance, starting this year. Direct payments totalling up to \$1,300 per child over the next two years, which is up to \$650 per year per child, will be provided for dental care services. This is the first stage of the government's plan to deliver comprehensive dental coverage for families with adjusted net incomes under \$90,000 and will allow children under 12 to receive the dental care they need, while the government works to develop a comprehensive dental care program. As I have said many times in the House before, healthy children today is a healthy Canada tomorrow.

The one-time top-up to the housing benefit will deliver an additional \$500 payment to 1.8 million renters who are struggling with the cost of housing right now. This more than doubles the government's budget 2022 commitment, reaching twice as many Canadians as initially promised. The federal benefit will be available to applicants with an adjusted net income below \$35,000 for families and below \$20,000 for individuals who pay at least 30% of their adjusted net incomes on rent, which is, unfortunately, a high proportion of those folks.

Business of Supply

In addition to those important pieces of legislation and the rest of the affordability plan, I would also like to speak about an important key measure to help Canadian families; that is the early learning and child care program that we have launched in every province and territory across the country.

Despite legitimate doubts that it was possible, we have already signed agreements on early learning and child care with every province and territory. Our plan makes work and life more affordable for middle-class Canadian families. It means an average reduction in fees of 50% by the end of this year. By 2026, regulated child care will cost an average of just \$10 per day right across the country.

Just recently, I heard from a constituent who is going to save \$9,000 a year, because he and his wife have two children. They are both going to get to work slightly longer hours, and neither of them will be part-time this year. They were so grateful to the Milton Community Resource Centre for signing on to the early learning and child care plan. I have visited the Milton Community Resource Centre a number of times to ensure that its priorities have been met through that program. It is serving my constituents in Milton and so many families are going to save thousands of dollars next year, thanks to that program.

• (1055)

Labour force shortages are a problem right now for our economy, and affordable early learning and child care is going to be such an important part of Canada's solution.

At this point, I feel that I should make a comment on the so-called payroll taxes about which the Conservatives keep talking.

Canada pension plan contributions are not a tax; they are an investment in one's own retirement, security that receives a tax credit or a tax deduction. The CPP provides an affordable, low-cost and modest pension for Canadian workers outside of Quebec, who are covered by similar benefits of the QPP.

Many Canadians are worried that they will not have put enough money away for their retirement, and fewer and fewer Canadians have workplace pensions or large savings on which to fall back. Our government has delivered on a commitment to Canadians to strengthen the CPP, in collaboration with provinces, to help them achieve their goal of a strong, secure and stable retirement.

The measures I have mentioned today would deliver targeted support to Canadians who need it most, without exacerbating inflation. That is an important balance, and the government's affordability plan is already putting money back in the pockets of Canadians who need it most.

Even as we deal with the very real challenges of the global economy, elevated inflation and increasing interest rates, it is important to take comfort in the reality that Canada has a really strong economic foundation as we face these global challenges. We will continue to provide timely support where it is needed most, all while maintaining fiscal discipline and responsibility.

It has been a tough couple of years for all of us. It does seem like we have to overcome one thing after another, but there are better days ahead, and Canada is in a really good place right now. The

numbers today dictate that, and our plan is a strong one. I hope all members in the House will support it.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was interesting listening to the parliamentary secretary talk about the fact that EI and CPP were not taxes. I would refer him to his government's own website, where it clearly states, under the tax basics section, that they are, in fact, taxes. I am not sure if he is aware of that, so I wanted to make him aware of it.

Also, the member talked a lot about the ways that the government is shovelling money into the economy during a period of high inflation. Again, a basic economic principle that Liberals seem to misunderstand is that whatever the cause of inflation, and we may disagree on the cause, part of the solution is in the hands of government. One of the things that hurts inflation and makes it worse is when the government continues to pile money into the economy.

I wonder if he understands that and if he wants to do something about it.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have been very ambiguous on which piles of money they disagree. Is it the CERB, which supported millions of Canadians across the country when they were out of work? Is it the wage subsidy, which supported small and medium-sized businesses across the country to support their workers? They have been very ambiguous with respect to which piles of money the government has been shovelling into the economy.

As somebody who grew up in a low-income household, my mother received HST/GST refunds, and they helped her pay the bills. I am really confident with these increases: the doubling of that GST credit; a little rental support for low-income Canadians; and ensuring that kids under 12 get dental care, and I can think of nothing more important than that. If the member opposite thinks that providing dental care for Canadians is shovelling money into the economy, then I think we would tend to disagree on that.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, all week long, both in question period and during Government Orders, members have been comparing EI premiums to a payroll tax.

On one side of the House, the Conservatives are saying the rates are terrible and have to be cancelled. On the other, the Liberals say rates have gone down by 30¢, or something like that, since they came to power.

They are both wrong.

For starters, employment insurance premiums are not a payroll tax. They are a safeguard. They are contributions to an insurance plan for people who lose their jobs. The Conservatives are hardly ones to talk: They were the first to pillage the EI fund.

Business of Supply

The current government is not one to talk either, because it is failing workers. Everyone is fighting over the contributions, but EI is not even available to 40% of people.

Imagine my private insurance company telling me it can insure my house, but only two of the rooms, not the other three rooms. It makes no sense. Either we have a proper safety net or we do not. This is a premium to protect workers.

Why did the government fail workers by putting an end to these emergency measures?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

Although I take French lessons three times a week, I will answer in English to ensure my comments are clear.

[*English*]

It is important to have a place, in the House, where we can debate the minutia and the details of the importance of a strong social safety net. That is why I appreciate the high-level question and debate from my hon. member.

We all agree, in the House, that a strong social safety net is really important so people can rely on a pension. It is just disappointing that some members in the House, who, let us confront it, have a really strong pension due to their work here in the House of Commons, would deny Canadians the very same.

I think it is so important that we stand up for Canadians and ensure they all have access to that security.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary talked about some of the things that are being done to make life more affordable for Canadians by the government, and I am very proud to say that the NDP played such a large role in dental care and some of these other movements, but one of the things that we have not seen the government move on is support for students.

On November 24, 2020, I brought forward a motion, which was unanimously accepted by the House, to freeze student loan repayments during COVID. That was not put in place.

We have since found that there are almost 70,000 students who have defaulted on their loans in Canada because they were not able to pay them back during COVID. We have some of the supports for some Canadians, and that is great, but I am not done yet. I am not done working for Canadians. I would like to be able to see some support for students.

What would this member bring forward to provide support for students in the coming months?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I do want to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for her work and her tireless advocacy on behalf of students and young people in this country.

In brief, what I will do is make my way over to her side of the chamber and discuss how we can better support students.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying I will be sharing my time with the member for Terrebonne, who will definitely be very interesting to listen to.

Before getting into the presentation on our topic today, I think it is important to properly understand the motion. As some have already mentioned, reading it feels like déjà-vu. It feels like we are debating the same topic we did on Tuesday, on the Conservatives' opposition day. They are really stuck on this theme. It is important to them and it does them credit. It remains to be seen how important this is as a position and an idea. We will talk about it some more.

The motion reads as follows:

That, given that the cost of government is driving up inflation, making the price of goods Canadians buy and the interest they pay unaffordable, this House call on the government to commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and pay cheques.

I will begin by addressing the elements they do not want a tax hike on, since I believe that that is what they are focusing on. That is what I gleaned from their remarks this week. They accuse the government of raising taxes on groceries, heating and paycheques. What are the facts? When they talk about a tax on gasoline, it is true that there is a carbon tax. Since gasoline produces carbon, there will be an increase in the carbon tax over time. Is this tax appropriate? I think so. Apparently, the Conservatives do not think so. Let us talk about this tax, because I think it is very important. It may even be the central focus of their motion, more than any other tax. In fact, this carbon tax appears to be what bothers them the most. As soon as we mention oil, their hair stands on end.

When it comes to the tax on groceries, I do not follow. They will have to explain what they mean. We will ask them questions later. Perhaps a member of the Conservative Party could explain how the government, with its new policies, is going to raise taxes on groceries. According to my understanding, basic goods at the grocery store are not taxed. The only products that will see a tax hike are, for example, sweets and soft drinks. These are not really basic goods and we do not really want to encourage their consumption. We know that there is a problem with the overconsumption of sugar and fats. Sugar is one of those ingredients whose content we should be trying to limit. I do not know why they should be so upset, given that these are not the most nutritious foods. People who live on sweets and soft drinks are probably very familiar with the health care system.

Business of Supply

Then the Conservatives talk about a tax hike on home heating. The last I heard, there was not going to be a tax increase on Quebecers' Hydro-Québec heating bills. Maybe elsewhere in Canada, but that is the carbon tax we were discussing earlier for people who heat with oil or gas, for example. These people may be affected. However, it is not a tax on home heating. Once again, the Conservatives are playing with words. It is sad to see. It is as if they are trying to say that the government wants to raise taxes on major daily costs, on essential goods. That is the crux of the Conservatives' motion: to portray the government as the bad guy.

Lastly, the Conservatives are talking about paycheques. They say that we will be raising taxes on paycheques. I must admit, they found a good way of saying it. However, I am uncertain about the content of the motion. It is more about form, and there is nothing really convincing about the content.

• (1105)

On Canadians' paycheques, we are talking about a very slight increase, but an increase nonetheless, in EI premiums. Of course, based on what we have seen with past Conservative governments, there would be almost no employment insurance if they were in power today. The Harper government did everything it could to cut employment insurance and tell workers that, if they are out of work, they should move. If memory serves, they had to accept jobs more than 100 kilometres away. Perhaps this was intended to help the oil industry or to empty the regions of Quebec. One thing is clear: the Conservatives missed a great opportunity to defend workers and reform the EI system.

They could have used their opposition day to point out that the temporary EI measures recently expired. Workers have been dealing with the gap in EI for a very long time now, and many people are not covered by the plan. The Conservatives could have said that it is time to talk about what we want to do with the employment insurance plan to better help Canadians now that the special measures have expired.

Based on their record, that is not something the Conservatives, who are calling us out for increasing premiums, would do. Increasing premiums is justified if there is a good reason, for example, enhancing the social safety net. In this case, we know that the rate of EI premiums is set by a commission, based on a seven-year forecast. I have not looked into it in detail but, during the pandemic, the government used the EI fund as a pandemic program so that Canadians could have an income. Helping people is not necessarily a bad thing, but the problem is that they depleted the employment insurance fund. They created huge delays, and the pandemic showed us that the EI program is no longer adequate and that it needs major reforms, which the government has still not done. I would very much like to hear what my Conservative colleagues have to say about that.

I would like to return to the issue of the gas tax we have heard so much about. They are afraid of the tax on gasoline. I understand that some people may be frustrated. When I saw the price of gas exceed \$2 a litre in Quebec, I was angry and thought it was outrageous. There were surely people who were profiting from the situation.

In the end, it is the oil companies that are making record profits. They raise the price one day, and raise it again the next. Then they lower the price, and no one really knows why. All we know is that gas prices tend to rise far faster than inflation. It is difficult to understand the underlying reasons for these increases in oil prices.

What I find surprising is that I never heard the Conservatives denounce the practices of the oil companies. I never heard the Conservatives say that they are making absurd profits. However, if we increase the tax on gas by 0.01%, it will be the end of the world. In their way of thinking, the Conservatives believe that, if they lower the tax on gas, the price at the pumps will go down. From personal experience, I can say that is a laugh, I have a feeling that the price will stay about the same and the oil companies will pocket even more. That is what is likely to happen.

These companies are not interested in Canadians' well-being. They are not trying to improve their living conditions. They are trying to raise the price as much as they can and as high as people are willing to pay to maximize their profits. If taxpayers get to keep more of their income because of a lower tax on gas, the oil companies will surely claw it back. Why would they not take the opportunity to make even more profits?

In fact, it is clear that this entire motion is meant to put a negative spin on the policies they do not like. That is not the real cause of inflation. The inflation problem was caused by a pandemic, by the fact that people stayed home and got money from the government. We had to help them. We did not want them to run out of money. They received money so they could meet their needs. Unfortunately, production stopped because people were at home.

• (1110)

When there is a gap between production and demand, prices rise. It is that simple. We need to help those who are suffering the most, not the oil companies.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, which I thought was very clear.

I would like to ask him for some clarification so I can better understand where the Conservatives are coming from. Why does he think the Conservatives are talking about an insurance premium as though it was a tax? I will make a comparison. When I pay my premium—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Business of Supply

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, my home insurance premiums obviously increase the amount I have to spend on my home. Are we to consider this a tax?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is very pertinent.

They are playing with words. I am an accountant and we talked about payroll taxes and social security premiums in my accounting courses. They are playing with words a bit.

Generally speaking, when we talk about a tax, we are not talking about a specific program that will benefit citizens. There are taxes we pay when we purchase goods, and these taxes go into a consolidated fund. There are also income taxes.

However, employment insurance is rather unique, because the fund is not fully arm's length. If it were, that would at least counter this argument.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to explain a bit about the carbon tax and the effect it has on people. I do not know if the member has had the opportunity to talk to constituents about the high cost of groceries or about farmers, who actually have to pay more for transportation and more for drying their products with propane, especially in Quebec with the cost going up.

This is a domino effect that affects every single thing people purchase. Unfortunately Canadians are already paying 43% of their money on taxes and only 35% on their housing, groceries and energy. People are in crisis. They cannot afford it. I am talking to constituents who are being evicted because of the high cost of housing. We need to help them. This carbon tax is a punitive tax and it needs to be repealed.

Now that I have explained it, could the member please talk about the people and how they are being affected in his constituency?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He asked me how people are living with the carbon tax in my riding. Perhaps this will explain the reality of my riding.

I must say that no one in my riding talks to me about the carbon tax. The reason is quite simple: This tax does not exist in Quebec.

As for the reality in my colleague's riding, I would encourage him to have another look at his party's long-term policies. The price of gas will continue to go up regardless, and, unfortunately, oil is really bad for the environment.

I hope we will continue to move towards the electrification of vehicles as soon as possible. The government needs to step up the pace. This would help lower oil-related costs in the medium and long term, and perhaps create an economy of the future in which we are the leaders, not the last in line.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, here we are again, watching the Conservatives focus on CPP and EI premiums while also working alongside the Liberals to line the pockets of the ultrarich CEOs who are price gouging Canadians trying to keep food on the table.

Does the member agree that we need to start fairly taxing those who are profiting off the backs of Canadians and put that money back into the pockets of those who need it most?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I think that my NDP colleague raises a good point.

Some people took advantage of the pandemic to line their pockets, unlike others, who are now tightening their belts. With the current rate of inflation, oil companies are making extraordinary profits. It appears that the banks also made huge profits and that some food industries increased their profit margins. It is not acceptable that these profits be made at the expense of poor people who are struggling to make ends meet.

I very much agree that measures need to be put in place. For example, we need to do more to make sure that those who are taking advantage of the situation are held accountable and made to justify their decisions. Also, as members of Parliament, we should encourage the government to implement tax measures in an effort to limit these types of practices. I am in full agreement with my colleague.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here to debate a Conservative motion that is interesting, to say the least. I really want the people who are listening to us today to read and understand the wording of this motion. It is very interesting, and I will explain.

The motion reads as follows:

That, given that the cost of government is driving up inflation, making the price of goods Canadians buy and the interest they pay unaffordable, this House call on the government to commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and pay cheques.

This motion is really interesting in that it represents the definition of populism. Populism is using issues that people are rightly concerned about, such as inflation, and proposing bogus solutions to achieve a goal that is not described in this motion. This is simply an attempt to downsize government and prevent it from doing its job while also manipulating people and taking them for a ride to feed their fear of, or concerns about, the carbon tax. I wanted to read it out loud and demonstrate just how little sense this motion makes.

The cure for populism is education. Therefore, I would like to give a lecture similar to the one I would prepare for a college student enrolled in economics 101. I go into much more detail with my master's students.

Business of Supply

Economics 101: What is an externality? An externality is when a cost or a societal effect is not included in the price, the price being a market indicator, of a good or a service. This externality is often incurred on goods and services for which there are environmental impacts that have not been quantified or taken into account in the price. The role of the state in these cases is actually to identify the externality and include it in the price.

That is exactly what the government is trying to do with its carbon tax. I will go into a bit more detail on the carbon tax. It is one of the necessary means to address climate change.

Let us go back to basics. What is climate change? I am looking at my friends over there to be sure they understand me clearly. Greenhouse gases, namely methane, CO₂, nitrous oxide and ozone, are gases emitted by human beings that have an impact on people through climate change. The effects of climate change have been studied extensively for the past 20 or 30 years. We know all about them now. We can measure their impact on people. A few years ago, I was a co-author of a study on the impact of climate change in Quebec. We know that climate change has real, tangible costs.

First, there are infrastructure costs because of floods and storms. Today our thoughts are with our friends in the Magdalen Islands and eastern Canada that were hit hard by a big storm, hurricane Fiona. Hurricanes are stronger now because climate change intensifies them. Shoreline erosion is also an issue that has a major economic impact.

Then there is the thawing permafrost. When the land thaws, infrastructure built on the ground, such as housing, collapses. Look at what is happening to our first nations friends.

Those are direct, tangible, quantifiable impacts of climate change.

There are also health impacts, including those caused by the emergence of zoonoses. What are zoonoses? They are diseases spread by animals that are vectors for disease, for example Lyme disease or the Nile virus. These diseases came from the south because temperatures are rising. There are also allergies. Our Conservative friends really like to talk about productivity and efficiency. When people have allergies, which are on the rise with climate change, they are less productive at work.

Finally there are heat waves. That is very important. Every year, heat waves cause the deaths of seniors in their homes. The Conservatives constantly talk about seniors. That is real. Older individuals are dying because of climate change and their lives have value.

• (1120)

The cost of these consequences is quantifiable, and it comes out to millions of dollars. Climate change has a cost for society. This cost is not included in the price we pay for gas.

Now that we have addressed the problems, let us talk about solutions. Economists have given us solutions many times. One of them is the carbon tax. Another is the cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emission allowances implemented a long time ago in Quebec.

In 2014, Quebec linked its system with California's. They did not link their system with any other Canadian province, but with California. They had to go south of the border to find people who cared to do something about climate change. That was in 2014, eight years ago. Maybe we were a little ahead of the curve in Quebec. This is not the first time I am saying that, and it will surely not be the last.

Quebec has assumed its responsibility in the fight against climate change. I will give a small but very important example to show how well these measures work. In 2015, Quebec reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 8.8% over 1990 levels. It works. The government must be able to implement measures to fight climate change.

The government needs to take action. Once again, the carbon tax is one of the measures it can use. However, we are happy that it does not apply to Quebec and that we can stay on the right track with the cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas emission allowances. There are plenty of other means, but it is obvious that tax measures are the best way for a government to change people's behaviour. That is a well-known fact; there is a lot of literature on the subject. I would be more than happy to send my colleagues a ton of papers. That might help them learn more about this very important topic.

Let us talk about the social cost of carbon. This cost does not reflect the market value of a tonne of carbon. There are now markets like Quebec's cap-and-trade system and the European carbon exchange that set a certain price. The social cost of carbon is higher. The U.S. has estimated the social cost of carbon at \$51 per tonne. A very recent study in the journal *Nature* suggests that the cost should be roughly \$180 per tonne. That is much higher than the estimate currently being used. The carbon tax is a start. It is nothing compared to the real cost of climate change.

The social cost of carbon is very difficult to measure. As I have already said, it can vary widely. Surprisingly, a tonne emitted in China has exactly the same impact as a tonne emitted in Canada. However, it is difficult to establish its value, which is why a range is used. This value is established by models that predict the impacts of climate change today and in the coming years. Everyone agrees that the next few generations are pretty important.

The government has a duty to take climate action. Everyone needs to come to an agreement on this, once and for all. Let us stop using issues like inflation, which concern the public and rightly so, to justify measures that stand in the way of the government taking climate action.

Business of Supply

The Bloc Québécois has proposed some real solutions to combat inflation. I gave the example of seniors. The Conservatives go on and on about how much they care about seniors, but they do not have much to say when we propose increasing old age security.

We are also proposing that we build more social housing. The government should be investing 1% of its revenue in social housing.

We have a number of solutions, but one very important one on which we should align with the Conservatives is the free market. Why do we not hear them talk more about protecting and, most importantly, increasing the power of the Competition Bureau? As my colleague mentioned earlier, companies are getting rich at our expense. We must fight oligopolies and monopolies that are artificial—making our prices too high.

These are measures that would truly help Quebeckers and Canadians. This is what the Bloc Québécois is proposing, while the Conservative Party proposes bogus solutions.

• (1125)

[English]

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have more of a comment than a question. I was very encouraged by the speech the member opposite just gave. I only wish that some of the members opposite me had been listening and that perhaps a few more of them were in the House to support the motion they have put forward because—

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that she cannot mention the presence or absence of members in the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I wish her members were in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It goes for both sides. We do not mention presences or absences in the House.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, the points the member made were very good. I am very glad to hear her call out the populism and the approaches being taken by the members opposite.

I would like to understand and get your thoughts on this. The new leader of the opposition has worked in the House since he was 24. He has never worked outside of the House. He has built his studies on the teachings of Milton Friedman. You spoke about his lack of consideration and lack of concern for monopolistic behaviour, as well as his emphasizing shareholder values and not worrying about Canadians. I am wondering whether you could comment on that and what influence that might have had.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that she has to ask questions through the Chair.

The hon. member for Terrebonne.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and question.

I think that, unfortunately, this motion is a bad start. There are many problems we need to address, but where are the solutions? I would like to remind our Conservative Party colleagues that real solutions do exist. Maybe we should be working together a bit more to help Canadians and especially Quebeckers.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my Bloc colleague for her comments.

She talked about populism, but I would like to give her another definition of that term. I believe that populism also means being sensitive to people's needs and anxieties. The government and even experts should be very careful about taking the attitude that they know more than the average person. It is an important consideration.

She talked about the price of carbon. In Vancouver, where I live, the price of gas is almost \$2.50 a litre, while in Alberta, it is roughly \$1.50 a litre. That is a big difference that is attributable to taxes.

My question is on employment insurance. Premiums are going up by 9% this year, which is not insignificant, especially when there is a multi-billion dollar surplus in the fund. Can the member say a few words about that?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, we can all agree on one thing: Alberta should be paying much more.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are here on the eve of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. I think the House's time could have been better used to talk about the pressing issues facing indigenous peoples, but instead, this is a rerun of the Conservative opposition day we had on Tuesday.

I met with the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association this week. Members from her province were in my office, calling for the creation of a national housing authority designed by and for indigenous people. We know indigenous people have been asking for an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy with sufficient funds to develop it. I am hearing from indigenous elders in my riding. My friend, Nora, is an indigenous elder from Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations. She is living in her car. That is unacceptable.

Does my colleague believe we should be focusing our attention here today on addressing those very important issues?

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

These issues are definitely very important. We are concerned about what is happening with first nations too.

In my speech, I talked about how climate change affects homes on first nations reserves that are built on thawing permafrost, on thawing soil.

Business of Supply

We should also address other issues, such as building social housing. We have shared our ideas about that. We just want to point out that Quebec has programs like AccèsLogis, which are paid for by the Government of Quebec. The federal government did not provide compensation for those programs for two years, so we had to build social and community housing ourselves. That meant fewer resources available to other people who need them because we did not get critical funding or support from the federal government.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will start by saying I intend to split my time with the member for Edmonton Strathcona.

This is the first time I have had occasion to speak in the House since my father, Bill Blaikie, passed away on Saturday. I am hoping there will be time at some point for a more proper and fulsome tribute, but for now I would be remiss if I did not give a big thanks to all of my colleagues, the people in the parliamentary precinct and those beyond.

Canadians across the country have reached out with some really lovely messages about the ways my father's life and work inspired them in their own work. I am very grateful for those messages, as are my mother, Brenda; my sisters, Rebecca, Jessica, and Tessa; and our entire family. I want to thank everyone who has been a part of that.

Of course, it means a lot to us, and it would mean a lot to my dad because he really did love Parliament, with all of its shortcomings, disappointments and faults. That love was borne of a very real belief that it can be a place for positive and constructive dialogue that can bring our country to a better place, if we do it well while we are in this place.

It is in that spirit that I would like to offer some remarks today on the Conservative opposition day motion. There are two things about it that I think need to be called out.

The first has to do with the very proposal in the motion, which is that the emphasis of government right now should be on broad-based tax cuts as a way to fight inflation. Even if the Conservatives are putting this forward in the best of faith, they have it wrong. They have been out there saying for a long time that more money chasing fewer goods leads to more inflation. The fact of the matter is that broad-based tax cuts, as opposed to targeted income support for people who really are on the margins, are not targeted. People on the margins are struggling with choosing whether they are going to put some food item back on the shelf or not, or struggling with homelessness because they lost their place to live or are on the cusp of that, as opposed to some of us who are experiencing discomfort as a result of inflation and maybe having to pass up some things we would really rather like, but that are, at the end of the day, not vital. Providing income support to those people who really are at financial risk is the way to bring Canada through this extraordinary moment of inflationary pressure, which everyone is feeling in some way, shape or form. We have to bring Canada through this in the best possible way, doing the least possible damage to the smallest number of Canadian families.

That is why the NDP believes in doubling the GST rebate. That is why we fought for an increase in payments on the Canada housing benefit. It is why we believe looking to structurally change the cost of things that Canadians cannot do without, such as child care, dental care and prescription drugs, is a better way to combat inflation exactly because it is not doing what the Conservatives say they are concerned about.

We heard at the finance committee yesterday that even the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, of which it is fair to say is by no means understood as a progressive organization, as it has been the chief deregulator and tax-cutter, defunding and cutting the public service for decades, has said that broad-based tax cuts right now are going to fuel inflationary pressures in exactly the way the Conservatives say we must not do. The reason for that is because broad-based tax cuts put more money back into the pockets of the people who need it the least. The more wealthy one is, the more money one already has, and the more one will benefit from broad-based tax relief.

Earlier, a Conservative member talked about students who are living in homeless shelters and single mothers who are worried about ending up homeless. They are not going to benefit in the same way from broad-based tax relief as people living in far richer neighbourhoods, nor will seniors living on low fixed incomes. If those are the people who we want to help, then we need to do that with targeted income supports. That is the way to do it, not only to get more help to the people who need it most, but also to avoid delivering more money into the pockets of people who will use that as disposable income because they already have a fair bit of income.

• (1140)

That is why there is a real difference of approach between the New Democrats on the one hand and the Conservatives on the other. One can tell that I sometimes think the Liberal government feels caught in between, and its recipe would be to do nothing, just watch the debate happen between Conservatives and New Democrats and stand back.

This is why it is important to push, and why I am grateful to Canadians for having elected 25 New Democrats to this Parliament to do that work of pushing. When we first proposed the doubling of the GST rebate, the Liberals said no. That was well over six months ago, and in time and with persistent advocacy by New Democrats in the chamber, and many, many voices in civil society outside the chamber, we were able to get the government to change course.

That is a story of success for Parliament. That is a story of the Parliament Canadians elected doing the work they want us to do. Sometimes it is messy, and it is not always pretty or fun to watch, but there is a job getting done here, and it is because of the wisdom of Canadians in electing a minority Parliament with strong voices on many sides of the House that we are able to move forward.

Business of Supply

The second thing I want to call out about this motion, which is a pet peeve of mine, and we heard it a bit before already today, is talking about increases in EI premiums and the CPP as though they were a payroll tax. If it were just a matter of arguing about words, then it would not matter. I do not care that accountants call EI premiums and CPP payroll taxes. If that is what they want to do within their profession for ease of accounting, that is fine by me.

When politicians start to talk about fighting payroll tax increases as a euphemism for fighting against properly funding our employment insurance system, I have a problem with it. When politicians use lowering payroll taxes as a euphemism for fighting against Canadians' pensions and denying increases in Canadians' pensions, especially when they are talking out the other side of their mouths about how much they care about seniors on fixed incomes, I have a problem with it. That is a major problem with this motion and what we have been hearing from the Conservatives today.

People are experiencing homelessness now who were not a couple of years ago and who are continuing to struggle with the difficulties of the economy we are in. There are a lot of jobs available in certain sectors of the economy, but it is still a difficult employment situation for other parts of the economy. There are people who are trained for those parts and have experience in parts of the economy that are still struggling, including tourism and hospitality, for instance. Those are industries struggling in various ways.

The hospitality sector is coming back, but if the employer is only willing to offer three three-hour shifts, the help-wanted sign in the window does not mean what a lot of Canadians think it means. It does not mean a full-time, well-paying, family-supporting job on the other end of that help-wanted sign.

Yes, we need to rebuild the EI system. We know that. We knew that before we went into the pandemic. All the more is the shame on the government for having reverted to the pre-pandemic employment insurance rules on September 24 without having a solve and without revealing the details of these consultations it has been doing, or having a better system in place in the first place. Employment insurance was leaving far too many people behind before the pandemic. We all know that.

We all know it needed to change, yet here we are moving away from the temporary rules of the pandemic, which were not perfect but were certainly better than what we had before, and we have gone back. Yes, EI premiums, after having been frozen during the pandemic, are eventually going to go up. That is part and parcel of providing insurance so people do not lose their homes when they lose their jobs in difficult economic circumstances.

A party that really had the backs of working people would understand that and not try to cover over its opposition to a proper EI system with euphemisms such as lower payroll taxes. The same is true of the Canada pension plan. We are at a point where the Canada pension plan finally is going to have another tranche for workers down the road. They are going to start to have to pay into that, as will employers. That is part of building better public pensions, so fewer Conservative politicians and others in the future will stand up to say how sad they are that seniors do not have a proper income. That is what is wrong with what is going on here.

• (1145)

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is working to put money back in the pockets of Canadians, as the member mentioned, by doubling the GST tax credit. Our government has supported businesses and Canadians through the pandemic and has helped Canadian families with affordable child care.

Does my colleague believe that this motion demonstrates a concrete plan to make life more affordable for Canadians?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the short answer is no, I do not think it does, for many of the reasons I highlighted in my remarks. I am glad that the Liberal government has moved forward on many initiatives proposed by the NDP to try to reduce the cost burden that Canadians are facing.

I will take this opportunity to pitch another one. I invite the government to take us up on the idea of ensuring that the old age security increase does not just apply to seniors 75 and over, but applies to all seniors who receive the OAS payment. All seniors, regardless of their age, are experiencing the same cost pressures that seniors 75 and over are, and they should be entitled to the same increase in benefits. It does not make sense to have a two-tier system for seniors in Canada with respect to the OAS or any other income support benefit.

I encourage the government to take us up on that one too. We would be happy to get that done.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to express my personal condolences to the member on the passing of his father, Bill Blaikie, who was the dean of the House of Commons when he was here and someone respected on all sides. As a Canadian Armed Forces veteran, I know he had a passion for our country and those who serve it. As someone who was inspired into politics through a parent who served, I know he can be very proud of the son he inspired into public service as well.

I know, having lived in Winnipeg, that families there are struggling. Grocery prices have gone up 10% to 30% in the last few years. We have seen gas and rent go up. People at the margins are particularly struggling. The government has the ability to either pause or reduce all input costs, whether they are taxes or changes to plans that run over decades.

Would the member not agree with the Conservative intent here? With record inflation, at the highest point in the member's lifetime because he is a young member, is this not the time to take a pause and give Canadian families in Durham or in Elmwood—Transcona a break?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Durham for his kind words. Those are very much appreciated.

Business of Supply

I think there is a tension in the Conservative position that manifests even in his question. He is asking about how we can try to reduce input costs, recognizing that part of what has been going on in the economy and with inflation right now has much to do with supply-side pressures, not demand-side pressures. However, what we hear most often from the Conservatives is that this is demand-driven and is about spending. It is all about the government spending too much money, and that is what is driving up prices. There are many factors driving inflation, so I am very glad to hear an acknowledgement of some of the other pressures that are creating inflation outside of government spending.

As the member knows, I think the best way to deal with those is targeted relief with income support for people who really need it, because simply cutting taxes for everyone will allow those who are wealthier to drive inflationary costs with increased demand at a time when we do not need that extra pressure.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to my colleague on behalf of the Bloc Québécois.

I was very pleased to hear him talk about increasing old age security starting at 65 in response to an earlier question. I was also happy to hear him talk about employment insurance in his speech.

I have a question for him.

We are talking about collaboration in a minority government, but his political party chose to focus on a dental care plan when the provinces and Quebec are the ones best placed to take care of that. There should have simply been an increase in health transfers.

I would like to know whether he thinks that health transfers should be increased. Moreover, why did his party not bring up EI reform at the negotiating table, such as a reform of the existing structures, instead of rushing ahead with a flawed system like the one being proposed for dental care?

• (1150)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I do not think my colleague will be surprised to learn that negotiating with a Liberal government can sometimes be very disappointing.

In a negotiation, there are two sides. We did our best to make sure that we could move forward wherever there was some common ground.

It is disappointing that the Liberals are not New Democrats and that they do not want to do all the things we want to do. However, we fully understand that Canadians have the right to elect a Parliament and that it is up to us to fight for everything we can accomplish. It is disappointing—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): My apologies, but we will have to leave it at that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to start today by expressing my disappointment that what we are doing here today is talking about this motion, on the eve of the second annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, at a time when indigenous people in this country do not have clean water, do not have adequate housing and do not have their basic human rights met, and at a time in this country when indigenous people are finding the graves of their children. On the eve of that day, this is what the Conservative Party has brought forward.

I am shocked by this, but I want to start by telling a story. Something happened yesterday. Yesterday, I was talking to a Conservative member, and no, we were not on screen and it was not in public. She asked me why we got into the supply and confidence agreement with the Liberals. She asked me what was in it for us. That is how she put it. I sort of laughed and said that maybe she needed to sit with that for a minute and think about it. Then all last night, I thought about it. Does she really not get why we did that? Was that really not something she could comprehend?

What it comes down to for me is that we did it because we were trying to get help for Canadians. We did it because we were trying to get dental care, pharmacare, environmental care and support for workers. It was for Canadians. We did not do it to win. We did not do it to get points off the Liberals. We did not do it to increase our power. We did it for Canadians.

As we stand in the House and debate this motion, which I will get to, I want us all to remember that every member of the Conservative Party of Canada has access to a dental care program that is gold-plated. Every member has access to a dental care program for themselves and their children, and the Conservatives are voting against just the bare minimum for other Canadian families in the country. For me, that shows what we are dealing with; that shows who we are talking about.

As members of this place, we all have such privilege. We have such voice. We have such opportunity. We all have access to benefits and wages that regular Canadians do not have, and we have an obligation, when we stand in this place, to think of those people and make sure that all Canadians have access to those things, the same things we have and our families have.

With this motion, the Conservatives are trying to mislead Canadians. They are trying to turn “tax” into a four-letter word. I know and members know that “tax” is not a four-letter word. It is, in fact, a three-letter word, but we will get to that.

They are trying to convince Canadians that they are on their side with this motion, but we are not fooled. Canadians are not fooled. The Conservatives continue to side with big business and are throwing Canadians under the bus with this motion.

One thing I do like about the motion is that it gives us an opportunity to talk about taxation. We do not talk about taxation often enough in this place. However, this motion avoids the most important questions: Who is paying and what are they getting for that money?

Right now, the tax burden in Canada is on Canadian families. It is on the shoulders of working families. That is not fair. It means that even if they have two incomes, it is hard to make ends meet. It has resulted in an imbalance in our country. We have a housing crisis that is forcing more and more people onto the streets, rental costs are skyrocketing and young people have no hope of owning their own home.

This was not always the case. There was a time in this country when corporations and the wealthy were shouldering their fair share of the tax burden, and our economy was booming. Workers were able to support their families, and the government was able to provide services because it was raising revenue from sources other than working families. However, successive Conservative and Liberal governments changed that. They have lowered corporate tax rates. They have created tax loopholes. They flipped the tax system on its head.

The last time people and corporations paid the same amount in income tax was 1952. Since then, the corporate tax contribution to our society has gone down steadily. Today, Canadians are paying four dollars for every dollar corporations pay in tax, but not all Canadian are paying that.

• (1155)

While Conservatives and Liberals were cutting tax rates for corporations and handing out corporate subsidies and tax credits, they were also cutting taxes for the richest Canadians and relying instead on regressive forms of taxation like the GST. It is not a secret. Everyone in this House knows that. We all know this, yet here we are debating a simple-minded motion that is designed to trick Canadians into believing that Conservatives have Canadians' best interests in mind. It is a motion that relies on making tax a four-letter word without addressing the most fundamental questions: Who is paying the tax, how much are they paying and why?

Which people governments tax, whom they take money from, whom they take revenue from and what governments spend it on indicate the governments' priorities. Over the past four or five decades, from Liberal governments to Conservative governments to Liberal governments to Conservative governments, on and on, we have seen a distinct pattern and an unbroken history of shuffling the tax burden to working Canadians and cutting taxes for the wealthy and for corporations.

Over and over again, Conservative and Liberal governments have demonstrated who they are and who they care about, and it is not ordinary Canadians. It is not workers. It is not students. It is not seniors. It is not indigenous peoples. It is not people living with disabilities. It is not people who are houseless.

Business of Supply

We do not need to look back 50 years to see what is happening in this country. Within three days of the global health pandemic being declared, \$754 billion went out to support financial markets, the big banks and the largest corporations. It took the government weeks and then months to get the support to regular Canadians who were actually paying for that \$754 billion to big banks. Conservatives are not interested in talking about that.

While I welcome the opportunity to talk about taxation today and while I am disappointed in the simple-mindedness of this motion, I also think we need to talk about how we could reform our tax system. New Democrats have proposed an entire range of reforms, all of which the Conservatives have voted against: a steady return to reasonable corporate tax rates, a pandemic profits tax to recover some of the hundreds of billions that Canadians provided to these corporations, a wealth tax, closing tax loopholes that allow the wealthy to escape Canadian taxes and going after tax cheats.

If we enacted these reforms, we could provide dental care for all Canadians. We could have pharmacare. Canadians would not have to worry any longer about whether they can afford their prescription medicines. We could pay for a housing strategy. We could invest in our future. We could build a better Canada. Tax is not a four-letter word. It just becomes that when politicians are trying to pull the wool over people's eyes.

Finally, I will finish by talking a bit about EI and CPP. Despite what the Conservatives may think, Canadians are not fooled by their conversation and nonsense about whether this is a tax. Canadians see what the Conservatives are doing. I am from Alberta. Albertans see what is happening. We see our provincial government attacking our CPP. It is something I hear about more often from my constituents than anything else. I know how Conservatives are working to destroy the safety net that workers rely on. Workers need their pensions. They need an EI system that works. This is not government money; this is workers' money.

Last week, the EI system reverted back to its broken prepandemic status. The changes that I and my fellow New Democrats fought for so that Canadian workers were not left out in the cold in the pandemic are gone. Instead of pretending that EI and CPP are a burden on working Canadians, I invite the Conservatives to join us to make sure that 100% of workers are able to get the support they need from EI and that 100% of workers can afford to retire with dignity with adequate pension benefits.

Business of Supply

Now is not the time for this motion. This political nonsense is designed to get the new leader of the official opposition some air-time and some retweets. Canadians do not want this nonsense. Canadians want all parties in this place to work together to make their lives better.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments in regard to CPP, because CPP, for many years under Stephen Harper, just sat idle. As the prime minister at the time, Stephen Harper refused to meet and work with the premiers to look at ways we could enhance retirement. One of the initiatives that was taken a number of years ago by this government was to work with the provinces to achieve an agreement on CPP.

However, Conservative members often refer to CPP as a tax. In fact, it is not a tax, as the member so rightly said. It is an investment by those individuals who are working today so that they will be able to have a healthier pension tomorrow when they retire.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts in regard to how the Conservatives want to label an investment in a future retirement simply as a tax in order to try to stir an emotional pot, which is so misleading.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I do not always find myself agreeing with the member, but today I do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I will let my colleagues finish their little rage fit over there.

I do not know if the member is aware as he is not from Alberta, but in Alberta, our UCP government is actually talking about taking our Alberta pensions away from the CPP, which is very dangerous. This is something that so many Canadians depend on for a dignified retirement. I do not think it is near sufficient the way it is, but the immorality and dangerous things that are being put forward by the Conservative Party with regard to our pensions are very disturbing.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand on my feet to ask a question on behalf of the constituents of Regina.

However, just to correct the record, the NDP literally signed an agreement with the Liberals, so those members are usually in agreement. There is a hard copy of their signature agreeing to prop up this government until 2025, so that is one falsehood.

I listened to the member's speech and she constantly talked about how Canadians are paying too much and how everyday, ordinary Canadians are taxed too high, yet she is going to vote against a motion that has tax cuts in it for everyday Canadians.

Secondly, she tried to make the agreement they signed with the Liberals a relevant agreement and she talked about why they signed it, but relevance is an issue for the NDP right now. The NDP are so irrelevant in Canada that the Saskatchewan NDP will not even let its leader come and speak at the Saskatchewan NDP convention. He was uninvited to the home of Tommy Douglas. What they—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are going to the answer.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I just want to say to the member that I am very thankful that I was able to do what I could to make sure that children in Saskatchewan are able to access dental care.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I believe that the Conservatives are moving this motion today because real solutions are much more complex. There should be more thought put into how to create wealth while protecting the environment and, above all, how to share this wealth.

We heard about populism today and, to my great surprise, a Conservative colleague said he was proud to be a populist. I almost fell off my chair, but these are sturdy chairs. My question is simple.

Does my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, who I hold in high regard, agree with me that this Conservative motion proposes simplistic and populist solutions to a complex problem?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. We have worked very well together on a number of issues, and I find that we align. I suspect him of being NDP in fact.

In terms of his question, I think it is true. It is very similar to what the member for Elmwood—Transcona said. It is dangerous when the Conservative Party brings forward motions like this that are filled with rhetoric and that are filled with disinformation. That is a dangerous thing, and we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to not allow the dialogue, the debate in this place, to be at that level. We need to elevate it, and this motion does nothing to assist with that.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will split my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

Canadians cannot afford the current Liberal government. The NDP-Liberals have made the cost of living so expensive that people are being forced to choose between heating their homes, putting gas in their cars and feeding their families. That is why the Conservative motion today calls on the government to immediately stop new taxes on gas, groceries, heating and paycheques. That would mean cancelling its planned carbon tax increase and their planned tax hikes on paycheques, which are all defined on the Liberal government's own website as taxes.

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The numbers are stark. A Canadian making \$60,000 a year went from paying \$3,400 a year in taxes under the previous Conservative government to \$4,169 in taxes today. The average Canadian family now spends more of their income on taxes than they do on food, clothing and shelter combined, and this share is going to keep escalating under the current Liberal government. That is morally wrong, and it is all a consequence of bad policy.

The cost of everything is skyrocketing. Families are spending \$1,200 more a year to put food on the table. Housing prices have spiralled out of control, and rising interest rates mean that half of young Canadians, 56%, who are looking to buy their first home have put their plans on pause or given up altogether.

Rent for a one-bedroom home in Toronto is over \$2,300 a month, and post-secondary students are living in homeless shelters. One in six small businesses are considering closing permanently, while almost two-thirds are still carrying debt from the last two years, in large part because of decisions made by governments. Of course, there is also the ever-increasing carbon tax that the Liberals promised would stay at a certain level, but it is going to blow way past that and way past what they claimed.

The Liberals keep saying this tax gives Canadians more back than they spend on it, but of course, the Parliamentary Budget Officer completely debunked that claim. The reality is that 60% of Canadians will not get back more than they put into it, and of course, courtesy of this particular Liberal government, Albertans are the hardest hit, paying \$2,282 more than they get back.

However, the carbon tax rebate is effectively the Liberal government using working-class Canadians as a 0%-interest loan. Proceeds are not returned, and it costs Canadians the exact cost of inflation for every month that they do not have their money, plus the cost of lost potential investment income.

For example, using what we all now know is actually a conservative inflation number of 3.4%, which was inflation in 2021 and has more than doubled this year, plus a conservative 2% rate of return on investments, and adding that to the average 2021 carbon tax cost for an Albertan of \$1,585, it is almost \$86 that has just disappeared, money that these Canadians will never get back and money these Canadians could have used to pay for their grocery bill that week or fill up their gas tanks. The Liberals are going to make these losses worse and keep taking more and more away from Canadians.

Conservatives are focused on Canadians who are struggling with this Liberal-manufactured cost of living crisis.

Coralea from Elk Point wrote to me. Her son has ADD and several other learning difficulties. To deal with these challenges, she sent him to a school about half an hour away from where her family lives. They were able to carpool with other families, and her husband had a well-paying job in the oil patch, but the Liberals' war on the oil and gas sector changed all of that.

Drilling rigs shut down, companies closed, investment dried up and projects were cancelled, all because of the risk and uncertainty created by the Liberal government, and unfortunately, like tens of thousands of other workers directly employed by the energy sector, Coralea's husband lost his job. He did find another job local to their home, but it paid him a third of what he was making. Coralea start-

ed a housekeeping business so their family could make ends meet, but that business was wiped out during the last two years.

A few months ago, Coralea's son's school called with a plan for the next four years that would actually see her son graduate with a diploma and his first-year apprenticeship, but she had to tell them that her son is not returning next year, because the skyrocketing cost of gas to drive an hour back and forth twice a day, is no longer feasible on their reduced income.

● (1210)

Coralea is not a Canadian who can afford to buy a fancy \$60,000 Tesla. She cannot even afford to rewire her home to accommodate the charge. She cannot afford to have an electric car that does not work in the snowstorms and in -40°C weather that people in Lakeland often experience. She cannot afford the taxes the Liberal government keeps imposing and hiking on Canadians.

Another constituent, Steve, who is a senior living in Vermilion, told me he received both CPP and OAS, both payments are indexed to inflation. The Liberals will tell us that seniors living on these programs are protected from cost of living increases and inflationary pressures, but that is just not the case. Under half of Steve's monthly gas bill is for the actual gas he uses. A full quarter of his bill goes to taxes, over \$50 a month.

For the first two quarters of the year, single adults received just over \$250 in carbon tax rebates. Steve would pay \$300 in taxes on his gas bill alone at the same time. He pays carbon taxes on his electricity bill, carbon taxes on his groceries and carbon taxes on the fuel he needs to fill up his truck. Steve is going to be taxed out of his retirement at this rate. He told me, "This carbon tax is killing me", and asked me to keep fighting against this "nonsensical and needless taxation."

Then there is 25-year-old Austin from Vegreville, who should have a bright future ahead of him. He should be ready to start his life, buy a home and plan a family if he wants. Instead, he has to decide on what bills he pays every month and whether he can afford groceries at the same time. His car ran into some issues, costing him \$850, \$850 that he cannot afford when gas prices have doubled and his gas and electricity bills are costing him \$400 a month. Austin works two jobs, at Walmart and at a local indoor arena. His girlfriend is 21 and works in early learning and child care. He is really worried about their future and he stood up. He told me to, "Scrap the carbon tax...Stop the spending, soften the blow of inflation, and actually make the middle class pay less tax and actually help us get ahead, not send us backwards."

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We could all go on about this from our constituents: from Jason, who runs a small public golf course in New Brunswick, who paid an extra \$6,000 in fuel from 2020 to 2021 and is anticipating another \$7,500 increase this year; to Linda, a widowed senior, who is still working as a school bus driver because she cannot afford to heat her home and put gas in her car; to Fred, who told me of a young family he sits beside every week at hockey practice that now has to choose which of their kids can play this coming season because the cost of travelling to games has become too much.

The cost of living crisis imposed by the Liberals is not “transitory”, it is not “Vladimir Putin’s inflation” and it is not “a supply chain issue.” It is inflation created because the government has consistently spent well beyond its means and ignored all Conservative warnings that its out-of-control spending would lead to higher prices of basic necessities for all Canadians.

The cost of living crisis driven by the government’s spending and tax increases on gas, groceries, home heating and paycheques is forcing the Canadians who I represent to choose between heating and eating, to choose which of their kids can go into sports or if they can at all, to choose whether they can afford to see their grandchildren, to jeopardize their children’s future because they cannot afford the costs anymore. This has to stop. The government’s reckless spending, its attacks on working Canadians and its continued tax hikes are ruining lives. That is why the motion today is so important. Canadians literally cannot afford the Liberals anymore.

As our new leader, the member for Carleton, has urged them for years, the Liberals must reverse course, find savings in government spending and balance the budget so all that debt is not passed on to future generations with nothing to show for it. It needs to stop fining, demonizing and firing Canadians whose personal medical decisions were not acceptable to the Prime Minister; stop destroying lives and livelihoods of Canadians by driving away investment, handcuffing the development of Canada’s natural resources in agriculture sectors, anchors to our economy, with its anti-business, anti-private sector, high-taxing red tape agenda; and commit today to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and paycheques.

• (1215)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, on a number of occasions, I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to explain his position on Bitcoin and cryptocurrency. The Canadian public deserves to know.

He pulled a stunt a number of months ago, I believe five or six months ago, where he bought a shawarma with Bitcoin. That shawarma cost him the effective rate of \$10 Canadian at the time. If he were to buy that same shawarma today, it would cost him \$22.35, given the devaluation of Bitcoin.

I am wondering if the member can provide her comments, since her leader will not, on where she stands on Bitcoin or will she stand up and refuse to even utter the words “Bitcoin” or “cryptocurrency”, like the Leader of the Opposition has done every time he has been asked this question.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, it is striking that the government has been in power for seven years, and has a deal to stay up to 10 years, and the consequence so far has been almost

never seen before skyrocketing prices on all basic essential necessities on literally everything.

Members of the government stand in the House of Commons and offer their thoughts, prayers, hope and compassion to Canadians facing the cost-of-living crisis, which they admit, yet the member wants to talk about everything and anything other than their own record and the cost-of-living crisis that they have created.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to get in on the debate, although I have been listening to it for hours. I would like to ask the hon. member for Lakeland a question that I have been wanting to ask since the hon. opposition House leader, the former Speaker of the House, made his speech.

The context in which the Conservatives put this forward is somehow that Canada, alone in the world, did quantitative easing, borrowed a lot of money to keep currencies afloat, to keep economies afloat. I want to refer her to the reports of the International Monetary Fund back in June 2020. All the economies of the G20 took the same steps. All of them, as well as ourselves, did quantitative easing. We can question whether these were good policies, but I would ask her to think about this.

If the member's current leader had been prime minister during the pandemic, would the Conservatives have decided to reject Boris Johnson's policies, reject policies of other ideologically aligned Conservative governments around the world and chart a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, the reality is this. The Prime Minister has spent more than every other prime minister combined in Canadian history. That is a consequence of the government's out-of-control spending through budget after budget. It is not just a consequence of the last two years, frankly.

I think Canadians want to see their elected representatives take responsibility for the government's policy agenda, which is making life too expensive and unaffordable, causing Canadians to struggle to make ends meet and causing great anxiety and fear about their futures. It just is mind boggling to me to hear elected representatives from other parties acknowledging the cost-of-living crisis, but taking no responsibility whatsoever and refusing to vote in favour of what is an obvious and immediate tangible measure that could provide relief to every single struggling working and everyday Canadian in every part of the country.

• (1220)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share the frustration of my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona that the Conservatives seem intent on mischaracterizing pension contributions as taxes. Both of my parents are pensioners. One thing I hear about frequently from seniors in northwest B.C. is how difficult it is to make ends meet on old age security, on the minimal public pensions they receive.

Does my colleague from the Conservative Party agree, first, that Canada's seniors deserve a significant increase to old age security; and, second, that this increase should accrue not just to seniors over 75 but to all seniors?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, this is another area where it is very striking to see the gap between the words of members of other parties, their actions and the actual outcomes of their policy agenda. The reality is this. The high taxing, high spending, high deficit policies of both the NDP and the Liberals disproportionately harm low-income Canadians; people on fixed incomes, seniors; the working poor; and the most disadvantaged people right across the country. Their policy agenda hurts them the most. The Conservatives are the ones offering a real solution to provide—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are talking about inflation, which is taking a toll on Canadians. This inflation was entirely foreseeable. The government could not keep printing stack after stack of money and not expect any consequences.

The ratio between the money supply and our GDP has increased drastically lately. It is unfortunate that nothing was done earlier on to regain control of the money supply. From the start, the government has been blaming inflation on the global situation, more specifically, supply chain disruptions. True, these disruptions are having an impact on supply and demand, but there are many other factors for which the Liberals have been responsible from the moment they took office, and those factors are behind this economic situation.

I do not want to be all doom and gloom today, but the Liberals' policies are leading us right for a cliff. There are two things that stand out to me regarding the situation we are now. The first is the Liberal government's inordinately large deficit, which is undermining Canada's financial stability and, even worse, endangering the economic prosperity of future generations.

When the Liberal Party formed government in 2015, Canada was in an enviable economic position. Not only did we have one of the lowest debt-to-GDP ratios in the G7, but we also had a budget surplus accompanied by positive economic growth. Canada was one of the best countries to invest in.

When the Liberals took office, they embarked on a spending spree that was unnecessary, considering the economic context. Canada's debt rose dramatically, going from \$626 billion in 2014 to \$1.049 trillion in 2021. Of course, part of that increase is a result of managing the pandemic. I want to talk about that management,

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though. Canada borrowed more than any other industrialized country, except Japan, and got little in return. Canada ranked 21st out of 33 industrialized countries in terms of average economic growth in 2020 and 2021, with the fifth-highest average unemployment rate.

Even so, this is still a level of debt that, all in all, could be managed well with historically low interest rates. However, by being short-sighted and failing to plan ahead, which is a recurring theme in the Liberal Party, the government was playing with fire. This situation could not continue if certain parameters changed, and now they are changing. As interest rates rise, servicing the debt will become increasingly expensive. Government forecasts will have to be revised.

The yield curve is inverted, probably signalling that a recession is coming. The 10-year treasury yield is rising very quickly, pointing to a growing lack of confidence in the Canadian treasury. Lastly, the increase in 10-year treasury bonds is making Canadian debt more expensive.

Who is going to pay for this debt? Who is going to pay the interest on it? Will it be Canadians? Can the government assure the House today that it will not raise taxes and other charges on Canadians, who are already struggling to fill up their cars and put food on the table?

The Liberals' silence speaks for itself. Why is that? This brings me to my second point about why the Liberals are responsible for the current situation. The Liberal government has been waging war on Canada's energy sector since 2015, which has made it hard for us to respond to global energy shocks. Canada has the third-largest oil reserves in the world and the 18th-largest natural gas reserves. Not only do we have quantity, but we also have quality, because we produce oil and gas more cleanly than countries like Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

With energy and gas prices soaring, let us imagine what Canada could do if it were an energy superpower. First, we could put more barrels on the global market, which would increase the supply and ultimately lower prices. Second, we could meet the energy needs of countries that really need it right now. I am thinking in particular of our allies in Europe, who are being held hostage by an authoritarian regime that controls the flow of energy into western Europe. Being an energy superpower is not just about meeting local demand, it is also about meeting an international need.

Instead, the Liberal government is trying to convince itself that Canada's energy industry is a thing of the past and that exporting our energy would be difficult because the product is far from the coasts. However, this is the same government that killed off over \$100 billion worth of Canadian energy projects and cancelled the development of key infrastructure meant to reach export terminals on the east and west coasts.

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• (1225)

President Biden would rather ask Saudi Arabia to increase its production, even though we are the United States' closest neighbour. That is shameful and embarrassing, not to mention hypocritical.

Yes, it is hypocritical, because the Liberals keep talking about fighting climate change, but they have done nothing to stop the supply of dirtier oil from Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

Canada's Minister of Natural Resources is talking about increasing natural gas exports to the United States, which will then export it to Europe. How out of touch is that? Instead of putting Canadians to work, developing Canadian expertise and creating Canadian wealth, which would help fight inflation, we are acting as the United States' lackey.

Canada's energy policy is a disaster for Canadians' pocketbooks. It is also a disaster in terms of making a positive contribution to the fight against climate change. Furthermore, it is directly responsible for the significant increase in energy and gas prices.

The government plans to triple the carbon tax soon. Is that still in the cards? Is it really a good idea to increase gas prices when Canadians are struggling to make ends meet?

Gas is essential for transportation, in particular the transportation of food. Last August, food prices rose 10.8% over the previous year, when they were already trending upwards.

Is it reasonable to consider adding an indirect tax on food by increasing the price on carbon at a time when food prices have jumped by nearly 15% in two years? It is utterly ridiculous to even be considering it.

Families are losing faith in the economy and are going deeper into debt. The ratio of household debt to income is now 181.7%. It is not just a question of what rising interest rates will do to Canada's ability to service its debt. We also have to consider what Canadians will do as interest rates continue to rise. How will they be able to pay down their debt if everything gets more expensive and their loans get more expensive but their income does not keep pace with inflation?

We could be headed for some dark days if we do not address this crisis quickly. The government must first provide certainty for Canadians by committing to not increasing taxes of any kind in an attempt to make up for its own oversights, mistakes and inaction.

The current situation paints a bleak picture for Canadians who will end up in debt slavery if this trend continues. It will be extremely difficult for the next generation to buy property. We cannot afford to ignore the economic importance of property. Canadians see it as a symbol of prosperity and independence. For many, it is a retirement fund; for others, it is financial leverage. It is a place to raise a family, the bedrock of society. We have to put families first and give them all the tools they need to prosper.

We are talking about the rising cost of consumer goods, but I would like to conclude with some comments about the other issues hanging over our heads. The 0% interest rate policy was in place for years. How did that affect the structure of Canada's economy?

That is a question we have to consider, because our party's motion makes even more sense given how much money was injected into the system and the unnecessary risks that companies and governments take when money really has no value because interest rates are near zero.

To get back to the main point of my speech, the government must give Canadians as much certainty as possible by not increasing their taxes.

I urge all parties to support our motion. To resolve the current inflationary crisis, I urge them to be prudent when it comes to government spending in the future and to stop the war on Canadian energy.

• (1230)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, the price on carbon pollution does not apply in Quebec. Consequently, my colleague's constituents will not be affected by that measure, although they will benefit from the relief set out in Bill C-30. However, I want to put that aside for a moment.

The price on pollution adds an estimated 2.2¢ to every litre of gasoline, but, in any event, Canadians are compensated for that increase.

Does my colleague believe that this 2.2¢ increase has a greater impact on the price of gas than the war in Ukraine?

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, my riding had a great liquefied natural gas project planned. Through that project, we would have been able to export natural gas and reduce the number of coal-fired power plants. It would also have reduced Europe's dependence on Russia.

I do not understand why we are not developing our natural resources as much as we should. The government is holding us back. I welcome the use of all kinds of energy. Why is the government shunning Canadian energy?

For the sake of our country, we should be making use of all sources of energy, particularly our fossil fuels.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, since my Conservative friends have no qualms about moving essentially the same motion today that they moved on Tuesday, I am not going to worry too much about asking essentially the same question that I asked a Conservative member on Tuesday, especially since I did not get an answer to it anyway.

In this intense period of fighting climate change, the federal government continues to invest \$14 billion in direct and indirect support for fossil fuels. In Quebec, an entire infrastructure is being created to support renewable energy. A company in my riding is working on developing electric engines for aircraft. This is key. We need more of this. The aviation industry emits 3.5% of all greenhouse gases on the planet. We will have to address that eventually. The \$14 billion that the government is investing in oil could be invested in new technologies. This would create wealth and jobs and would combat greenhouse gases.

Would my colleague not agree?

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, our fossil fuels have come a long way thanks to new technologies. We must never forget that.

As I have already said, I am not opposed to other energy sources. We are simply not there yet. Let us stop burying our heads in the sand. The demand for energy continues to rise. As I said, back home we had a great energy transition project planned involving liquefied natural gas, which would have reduced the number of coal-fired power plants in the world and eliminated Europe's dependence on the Russians.

I think we need to take another look at this, all of us together. We need to sit down and work together to develop the resources we have here in Canada.

• (1235)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am rather shocked by the inanity of the comments I have been hearing from the Conservative benches since this morning.

The former leader of the Conservative Party said that taxation is theft. He said Canadians were being robbed. He used the rather odd analogy of dumping a bottle of beer out on the ground, saying that it served absolutely no purpose.

Does my colleague from the Conservative Party not think that, if taxes are well thought out and progressive and take care of the less fortunate, they pay for public services, a social safety net, roads, schools, universities and hospitals for the people in his riding?

An American doctor once said that taxes are the price we pay for civilization. Has the Conservative Party forgotten that when we pay taxes, we get services in return?

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, if the government had properly managed the budget from the beginning, we likely never would have gotten to this point.

I recall that in 2015, stimulus measures meant that there was no need to inject money into infrastructure or the economy, because the stimulus drove economic growth.

This government is unable to predict anything. Everyone knows that what goes up must come down. The economy goes through highs and lows. The economy was on a high and the government was just throwing money around. Now, we are struggling. People are struggling. Interest rates are skyrocketing. People are struggling to put food on the table. People no longer know what to do. They are very worried about debt.

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The government has been irresponsible.

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my dear friend and colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North, which is in the beautiful city of Winnipeg in the beautiful province of Manitoba. I know it will be riveting for everyone to hear the member's remarks, after I give mine of course.

I am pleased to respond to this motion today, brought forward by the official opposition. The government's timely and targeted measures played an important role in helping Canadian businesses weather the pandemic and now respond to the global inflation that has taken a hold of Canada and the world for reasons we know quite well. It has helped Canadian businesses and workers deal with the economic uncertainty and financial challenges brought on by COVID-19, by supply chain issues and now by the subsequent and very unfortunate barbaric invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

Our government enacted its plan while also exercising fiscal responsibility and prudence. It is a serious plan with serious leadership. Our actions have built a resilient foundation as the world economy continues to face strong headwinds.

I remind my hon. colleagues that if they have read the news in the past couple days about what is going on in Europe regarding movements in bonds and stock prices, and Nord Stream, there continues to be greater uncertainty in the world economy that we too will face and that is coming to the shores of North America. That is why we need serious leadership for these very uncertain times.

Canada is faring better than other G7 countries in these difficult times. The OECD continues to project that Canada will have the strongest economic growth in the G7, both this year and in 2023. The OECD just revised this week its projections for economic growth.

In addition, Canada has the lowest total government deficit in the G7 this year, and by far the lowest net debt burden among these countries. This is due to our government's overriding commitment to fiscal prudence, to maintain a fiscal framework and to always maintain our AAA credit rating to ensure a good, strong fiscal position, not only today, but going into the future for all our children, including my three kids.

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However, Canada is not immune to adverse global developments. Global supply challenges and elevated energy prices resulting from the illegal, barbaric Russian invasion of Ukraine are adding upward pressure on global prices, including in our country. We also know that inflation is a global phenomenon that is a lingering result of the pandemic. It is exacerbated by worldwide events, and it is making life harder for many Canadians, including those back in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Canada's job market is strong, though, and businesses are doing well. Corporate profit margins and corporate balance sheets are actually very robust, and companies are investing in this country. We have seen this in the automotive sector here in Ontario. We have seen this with our steelmakers here in Ontario. We have seen this with our artificial intelligence in organizations like in the city of Montreal.

That is why our government support programs continue to be so important for the Canadians who continue to face challenges today because they are exposed to high inflation, including seniors, folks with fixed incomes, and working Canadians.

We have an affordability plan that includes many important measures. This is to support the most vulnerable people in our communities, to help them at a time when the cost of living is a real challenge for many Canadians. Our affordability plan is a suite of targeted measures totalling \$12.1 billion in new support in 2022 to help make life more affordable for millions of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, including those in my wonderful riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Simply put, we are helping Canadians cope with inflation, and I am very surprised that the Leader of the Opposition did not mention our measures in his motion.

Therefore, allow me to outline some of the key measures in this plan that will help Canadians manage inflation, including the GST credit. We will double it with Bill C-30 for six months to help 11 million Canadians, with \$2.5 billion in relief going to the Canadians who need it the most, like our most vulnerable: single mothers, seniors and folks on fixed incomes.

It is something that is concrete and tangible. We can get it out the door before the year ends. I am glad to see, if I understood correctly, that the official opposition party will be joining us in moving this bill quickly through Parliament and having it receive royal assent, so we can get this help to Canadian families.

In Bill C-31, we have a one-time top-up for the Canada housing benefit to assist nearly two million renters with \$500. Again, it would be timely relief that would provide help to Canadians who need it the most.

● (1240)

I will say one thing on the Canada pension plan, because it has been mentioned by various individuals. The CPP was enhanced in June 2016 by our government, after coming to an agreement with all provinces in Canada, to ensure that Canadians have a secure and dignified retirement in their golden years. It is something we worked on with all provinces and we came to an agreement. It demonstrates, again, what I call serious leadership. It is leadership

that recognized that Canadians who were retiring needed their Canada pension plan to be enhanced from the level it was at. It was called the replacement rate on their wages and salaries. This is so important because many Canadians do not enjoy a defined benefit pension plan provided under unions or provided to public sector employees.

When Canadians retire, they depend on the Canada pension plan. It is indexed. It is monthly. It is an annuity stream. It is one of the best examples of how Canada is leading the world in ensuring a secure and dignified retirement for its citizens. It was applauded by all corners of our country and somewhat supported by different political parties at the provincial level. These are contributions by our citizens so they can have a great, secure and dignified retirement. This is something we need to continue working on with the types of measures that assist Canadians. Again, this is what I call serious leadership, prudent leadership and reasonable leadership.

On the question of employment insurance, employment insurance is about contributions. They are contributions by employees and employers for when someone is laid off or when there are changes in the economy.

Earlier this week, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, otherwise known as OSFI, released its actuarial report on the employment insurance system. It is in the Employment Insurance Act, something that has been in existence under Conservative governments and Liberal governments. It talks about the seven-year break-even rate. The funds do not go into general government revenues. There is an operating fund for EI; it is there. I was actually reading the report this morning, again from OSFI's chief actuarial officer, and it talks about the EI system.

We know we need to continue to alter and change the EI system to respond to changing workplace requirements and job requirements given the sectoral and geographic changes that happen in our economy and our country. It is very important that when we speak about EI and speak about CPP, we note that these are bedrock programs for our social safety net. They are there to assist Canadians.

Thus, I say again that we need serious leadership at times when there is economic uncertainty and when there are global events happening. To use sound bites and clichés, I think, is a disservice.

On the question of dental coverage in Canada, I said in the prior opposition day that as members of Parliament, we meet a lot of different constituents. I have met constituents who are dealing with dental coverage, especially seniors, and who do not have dental coverage. They did not belong to a public sector union or are not covered under benefits when they retire. They have no coverage. When they go see a dentist, they are paying out-of-pocket.

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We need to cover for those seniors. They deserve it. They deserve our support; they deserve our help. That is exactly what our government is going to do. We are going to start off, this year, helping those under 12 with income-tested and means-tested programs. I greatly support means-tested programs. Then we are going to help seniors as well. We are going to make sure that this is in place because it is the right thing to do.

That is, again, dealing with serious leadership in these times and identifying issues that we can all work on as parliamentarians. We can work together to make sure we are taking care of individuals who need assistance.

Seeing a dentist is important for our health, but it can be expensive. A third of Canadians currently do not have dental insurance, and in 2018, more than one in five Canadians reported avoiding dental care because of the cost. That is unacceptable in our country. For these reasons, the government has previously committed to providing dental care for uninsured Canadians with a family income of less than \$90,000 annually.

As I know my time is quickly running out, I wish to say happy Thursday to all of my dear colleagues and to all of their constituents at home.

● (1245)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I like to look at both sides of the coin to see the positive and the negative aspects of a situation. The government has invested and continues to invest a lot of money in many areas. We cannot be against a good thing. However, the other side of the coin is that the positive impact of some measures is temporary, while other measures are just making up for the lack of investment in previous years, not just by this Liberal Party, but also by the Conservatives. We have made up most of the lost ground in certain areas but we are just getting started in others. Let us stay positive.

The current motion seems like a good idea, because everyone would like to pay less taxes.

Let us now look at the other side of the coin.

Could my colleague explain the impact of a recession on services and debt if government coffers were emptied by a combination of more money going out to taxpayers and less revenue coming in because of the reduction, elimination or suspension of a tax?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, in terms of where our economy is, as we saw in the GDP report that came out this morning, the Canadian economy continues to grow. We are seeing the impact of uncertainties in global dynamics and of higher interest rates brought on by the Bank of Canada, but I will say this. We have continued to strengthen our social safety net, whether through the Canada child benefit, the third improvement to the Canada workers benefit, a program I really love, the 10% increase to the GIS, the 10% increase to old age security or creating the environment to grow our economy. That is why I ran as a Liberal MP in 2015 for the economy. I saw the anemic growth that was happening under the prior government.

It is important to take all those things into consideration. We are moving the economy forward and have a strong fiscal framework. We can respond when we need to.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are many reasons why we have inflation happening right now in Canada. Some things we do not have control over and some the government very much does. One of those things is corporate greed. We have heard from economists at Canadians for Tax Fairness, who say there is a very simple reason for this inflation and for the affordability crisis. It is because corporations are taking the opportunity to raise prices. They also say the people who have the least are being asked to sacrifice the most.

As a member of the government, would this member support a corporate tax that would look at the massive profits that corporations are gouging consumers with? Does he look at a tax as a potential opportunity?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, first, on any sort of consumer gouging that is happening, we introduced in prior legislation, which I think was in the BIA, changes to the Competition Act to give the Competition Bureau more power when that occurs. We never want to see that occur. I hate crony capitalism; I very much dislike it. The Competition Bureau needs to be strengthened and we are doing that.

With regard to taxation, very frankly, every Canadian and every organization needs to pay their fair share of taxes. We have a progressive tax system. We have actually made it more progressive over the last six years. We cut the middle-class tax rate when we first came in. We are raising the basic personal expenditure amount to \$15,000 and not providing it to those in the upper incomes. It is a great policy. We are taking people off tax rolls, including seniors and hard-working Canadians, and we will continue to do that. Recently, we increased the corporate tax rate on banks and financial institutions, again asking those organizations that can pay extra to do so.

We will continue to do what is right for our economy. We will continue to ensure that everyone pays their fair share so we can deliver the services that Canadians depend on day in and day out.

● (1250)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, if we talk about what companies need right now, it is jobs. We are short 1.03 million jobs in this country, and we have a government right now that is looking to increase taxes on the workers who are trying to work and who are not getting by. Inflation is caused by more money chasing fewer goods, and one of the ways to produce more goods is to have more workers.

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Companies are looking for employees who make the food and truck the food across our nation. To ensure that we produce more of the innovation we need for Canada, they need workers. If companies had more workers, it would mean more payroll taxes, which would go to the government. It does not make any sense that we are taxing Canadians more to produce more money when we just need more workers.

What is the government doing to create more workers for Canadian companies?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, in my riding I have the training facility for LiUNA Local 183, one of the largest private sector construction unions in the country, and the carpenters' union. Through the union training and innovation program, or UTIP, and through the labour mobility tax deduction for workers to move into different areas, our government is right there working with unions. We are right there with the skilled trades, making sure that, like my father, who was a labourer, carpenter and roofer, the next generation of workers is there to build our communities, maintain our infrastructure and continue to move this country forward. We will be there today and we will be there tomorrow.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I like to think of what is being proposed by the Conservative Party as another opportunity for us to really express the contrast. What a difference there is between the Conservative Party and the governing party, the Liberal Party of Canada. We have a Prime Minister, ministers and in fact an entire Liberal caucus who are very much focused on ensuring that we have an economy that works for all Canadians. That is our priority.

It should be no surprise that back in 2015 when we formed government, we made a commitment to Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it. If we take a look at the policies, whether they are budgetary measures or legislative measures, members will find that we have been consistent virtually from day one.

When we had the worldwide pandemic, and I emphasize "worldwide", we responded by supporting Canadians. We supported them in a big way. For millions of Canadians, small businesses and individuals, we were there. We spent billions of dollars in support, and the Conservatives actually voted in favour of many of those billions of dollars. However, today, they criticize us for spending that money. There is a word in the dictionary that would best describe this but it is unparliamentary so I will not say it. However, I can tell members that the Conservative Party of Canada is all over the map on all sorts of economic and environmental issues. The Conservatives are not consistent.

Last Tuesday, in an emergency debate, they talked about taxes, and they used the example of the price on pollution. Members will remember that Stephen Harper was supportive of a price on pollution, but the Conservatives back then said, "No, we don't support a price on pollution." They were jumping up and down in opposition saying that it was not a price on pollution but a tax. Then the former Conservative leader, the one before the interim leader, indicated very clearly that he supported the principle of having a price on pollution. That leader was the one who led the entire group, and every Conservative candidate in Canada campaigned on a price on pollution. However, again, we see members of the Conservative

Party taking a massive flip. They have changed their policy, even though they campaigned on it, and now they do not support a price on pollution. Now they are talking about other taxes.

We can think of the leadership of the Conservative Party and the need to be consistent. What did the Conservative leader talk about? My colleague from Kingston and the Islands has raised this on a couple of occasions and the Minister of Finance has raised it. Many of us in the Liberal caucus do not understand why the leader of the official opposition today, as a leadership candidate, said to all those who wanted to listen to invest in cryptocurrency. He said that was the way to fight inflation. He encouraged Canadians and his followers to invest in it.

We have to feel for the individuals who followed the advice of the Conservative leader. Who knows? Maybe it was not his personal idea; maybe it was from another Conservative. I do not know. The bottom line is that it was a stupid idea. At the end of the day, how many Canadians lost thousands of dollars because they listened to today's leader of the Conservative Party just a few months back?

We can think of the Bank of Canada, an institution recognized around the world for its independence and good stewardship on the issue of Canada's money supply and the impact it has on our economy. Well, the leader of the Conservative Party had an idea: He would fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. How bizarre is that?

• (1255)

There were even Conservatives who did not support that. I can recall at least one who was somewhat displaced from the front bench and the role he was playing because he was vocal that this was a dumb idea. He spoke truth to power, many would ultimately argue.

The Conservatives talk about wanting tax relief and wanting to give relief to Canadians because of inflation. There are two things that come to mind. Number one is that they need to take their collective heads out of the sand and recognize that inflation is taking place around the world. In the U.S.A., the inflation rate is higher. In Europe and in England, the inflation rate is higher. It does not mean that Canada should not be doing anything.

We have a progressive government that has consistently, from 2015, been there for Canadians in a very real and tangible way. In fact, we have brought forward two pieces of legislation that would provide virtually immediate relief for Canadians. We all know, in regard to the GST rebate, that Bill C-30 has passed into committee. That was to give 11 million Canadians money in their pockets to assist them in dealing with inflation. Originally, the Conservatives opposed it. That is hard to believe. How do they oppose something when they are saying they want tax breaks and that is what we would be providing? We would be providing cash in people's pockets, and originally the Conservatives opposed it.

Business of Supply

I am grateful. I do not want to come across as being ungrateful all the time. I am grateful the Conservatives actually changed their minds again. This time, 11 million Canadians are going to benefit, because of the Conservatives changing their minds and supporting sending the legislation to committee. I am an optimist, with my fingers crossed and all. I am hoping it will go through the committee and get through third reading, and hopefully we will be able to do that in a relatively quick fashion. We have to do it before they change their minds again, but that was an encouraging sight.

We have Bill C-31, which would do two things. One is that it would establish, for the first time in history, here in Canada, an opportunity for parents to collect support for dental care for children under the age of 12. Who would oppose that? At a time when we are experiencing inflation and have children who are going into hospital for emergency services in order to get dental work done because they cannot afford to get it done, and we have a government that is bringing forward legislation that would assist them in doing that, it is hard to believe the Conservatives would oppose that.

Tied into that legislation is additional support for people who are having a difficult time making rent payments. It is hundreds of dollars, and millions across the country, and the Conservatives, again, are indicating they are not going to be supporting Bill C-31. It is unfortunate.

On the one hand, they say to support Canadians. On the other hand, if they are ashamed, we can convince them to make a flip-flop, as with Bill C-30, but we still have a little more work to do to get them convinced that providing a service to our children under the age of 12 to get dental work is a good thing and they should support it, and that the support for rental payments is worthy of support. Hopefully we will see Bill C-31 pass.

There are so many things the Government of Canada is doing to support our economy and the people of Canada. The emphasis is on ensuring that we have an economy that is working for all Canadians. At the same time, we understand the importance of health care, whether it is long-term care, mental health, dental or working with the provinces, and it does not mean being an ATM. What it means is ensuring there is a higher sense of accountability.

● (1300)

Canadians deserve the best quality health care, and this is a government and a minister who are committed to delivering that.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we see the motion before us today and we hear the Conservatives talk about the CPP as a payroll tax, when we know that in fact the CPP is retirement security. It is deferred wages, but the Conservatives are manipulating workers to believe that they are paying a tax when their CPP goes up so they will have more retirement security. Their employer has to match it. Therefore, who benefits from the Conservative motion? It is big corporations, because they pay less money to match their employees. This is something that was asked for by premiers across Canada, including many Conservative premiers, but the Conservatives forget to mention that to their own premiers.

I think the Liberals have also dropped the ball on the OAS. They are only giving the 10% increase to those who are over age 75. Does my colleague agree that the CPP is deferred wages and security? Also, does he agree that people who are 65 and older should get the OAS increase of 10%?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I believe that Stephen Harper was never a big fan of the CPP and that is the reason why for a decade there were never any discussions at all with respect to looking at the increase. Shortly after forming government in 2015, the Prime Minister indicated that we wanted to be able to enhance the CPP. We had a minister at the time who went out and negotiated, and we were able to bring everyone to the table so that we could actually increase the CPP. Increasing the CPP means the workers of today will have more money when it comes to retirement. To try to say that it is a tax is just wrong. It is so misleading. This is an investment in their futures. It is an investment by workers today for their future retirements. I am very proud that we have a government that recognizes the value of the CPP and got the provinces together to make it happen, which is something the Conservative Party failed at doing.

● (1305)

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I see the member's passion and I respect that. I have a question for him.

Canadians are spending 43% of their income on taxes and 35.7% on basic necessities. Could the member help me understand something, because I guess I am a bit of a numbers person? Are we giving them all of these benefits to pay for the increase in taxes? Is that how we are helping the individuals who really need our help today?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me quote the Minister of Finance from yesterday, who stated:

...actually, for middle-class Canadians we have cut taxes and made them better off. Today, a single parent in Ontario with two kids under six and earning \$60,000 a year pays nearly \$5,600 less in taxes than she did under the Conservatives. She will receive nearly \$8,900 more from reduced child care fees and the dental benefit. She will be more than \$14,400 better off than she was under the Conservatives.

Facts speak volumes. The fact is that, when it really came down to it and the Conservative Party had an opportunity to vote for a tax break for Canada's middle class, they voted no. That was a tangible piece of legislation. They could have voted yes, but they said no to tax breaks for Canada's middle class. To make matters even worse, when we wanted to tax the 1% wealthiest in Canada with an extra tax and we put it in as a government, again the Conservative Party voted no.

This is a government that is committed to working for Canadians, with Canadians, to ensure we have a healthy economy and society.

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[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague on the fact that the motion being studied today is a bit ideological and populist with respect to inflation.

However, we cannot deny that inflation is having a tangible and devastating impact on housing.

I want to talk about housing construction projects in Quebec and Canada. These projects were approved by the government under various programs that were launched. At the time that they were approved two or three years ago, the rate of inflation was not what it is today. Now that it is time to start building these housing units, the rate of inflation has exploded and we can no longer move forward because of the labour shortage, even though the government had approved these important projects.

In some cases, the government does not want to pay the extra money to open these doors. It is a real problem—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but his time is up.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has 15 seconds to answer the question.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there has been no government in Canadian history, I believe, that has invested more in housing. It is going to take more than just one level of government to resolve the issue. We need to incorporate the municipalities and provinces in order to be able to deal with the housing crisis, and that is something we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Chilliwack—Hope.

The residents of my riding, the good people of Miramichi—Grand Lake, are struggling. They want to take control of their lives. They want to take control back from the government, which continues to take it from them.

After the pandemic, after hurricane Fiona and after years of broken Liberal promises to improve the lives of the middle class, folks are done with these Liberal gatekeepers making things worse. The cost of Liberal spending is driving up the cost of living. The GST rebate will provide welcome relief that Conservatives support, but it will not address the real problem. Inflationary deficits and taxes are driving up costs at the fastest rate in nearly 40 years.

A half a trillion dollars of Liberal deficits bid up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest rates we pay. Inflationary Liberal taxes have inflated the cost of making the goods we are buying. The more the Liberals spend, the higher the taxes, and the more things cost is just inflation.

The folks of my riding have racked up mountains of debt. Credit cards, lines of credit and people are so desperate they refinanced their homes, using up the equity they need to retire just to pay for

groceries and gas. The cost of living is a total crisis in Canada, and the Liberals caused it and are making it worse.

The carbon tax is going to triple the cost of everything in this country. Do Liberals understand what that means to Atlantic Canadians and to those in my riding of Miramichi—Grand Lake? Heating oil is one of the most common ways we heat our homes in Atlantic Canada. It is delivered by trucks that run on diesel. That is also going up in price. The NDP and the Liberals voted just yesterday to triple the carbon tax.

Enough is enough. It is time for the Liberals to listen to Conservatives: no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating or paycheques in our country.

Canadians cannot make ends meet as it is, never mind affording a tripling of the carbon tax. Four out of five Canadians have to cut back on food because they cannot afford groceries. It comes at a time when Canadians cannot even fill up their cars or trucks to go to work. This is not a luxury. It is the reality of rural Canada. Because the Prime Minister is so busy jet-setting around the globe, he rarely ever comes to Atlantic Canada. He does not realize we burn furnace oil and still use wood heat and wood pellets.

This is exactly the wrong time to raise taxes on paycheques, gas and other essential goods. Inflation is at a 40-year high, and nine out of 10 young people who do not already own a home do not think they ever will. Imagine being in this age bracket in our country and believing it will never be possible to own a home in Canada. I have constituents who feel this way. I take their phone calls and get their emails. I see the struggle of young families in rural Canada every day. Members on this side of the House understand that struggle.

Home prices in New Brunswick skyrocketed in the last couple of years as folks in Ontario and Quebec fled the unaffordable cost of living, putting home ownership further out of reach for young people in places like Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Conservatives are calling on the government to cancel all planned tax increases, including payroll tax hikes planned for January 1 and tax hikes on gas, groceries and home heating on April 1. We are demanding it today.

It has been crickets from the six Liberal MPs from New Brunswick as their government imposed a more punitive carbon tax on New Brunswick than other Atlantic provinces. It has been crickets from the six Liberal MPs when the federal government shut down the proposed iron ore plant in Belledune. Where was the member for Acadie—Bathurst when that was shut down? The Belledune proposal, quite frankly, shows how backward the Liberal approach on the carbon tax has been.

• (1310)

Instead of creating paycheques in New Brunswick, very close to Miramichi, and processing iron ore using modern technology that would reduce global emissions, the Liberals killed the project with their carbon tax. The result is that the iron ore is going to be processed overseas by a higher-polluting plant. We cannot make these things up; they are real, and the people of my region lived it, because those jobs do not exist now.

The Liberals are just not getting it right for Canadians on the cost of carbon tax. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the carbon tax costs 60% of households more than they get back, but I guess that is really the point. Every day, I try to table this report, but I never receive unanimous consent. I wonder why.

The Liberals have repeatedly hiked taxes to pay for their out-of-control spending, but Canadians cannot afford it. The cost of Liberal spending is driving up the cost of living. Who is supporting it? It is the NDP, the very elected officials who were not elected to be the government. They were elected in opposition, like many members of this House. However, the Canadian public now has them in caucus with the Liberals, which it did not want. Nobody voted for it, but believe me, they are going to pay for it. Everybody knows it, and it is so good to know that.

After the Liberal broken promises, the pandemic and now Fiona, I am here on behalf of my constituents, my family and friends, and all the people struggling in one manner or another with the state of the economy right now in Canada. We are all actively involved in our respective regions and see the suffering the cost of living is causing to our fellow Canadians. This, in and of itself, should be a reason to set politics aside and support this motion.

I want every member to think about this when considering how to vote. My electoral district of Miramichi—Grand Lake has the historic county of Northumberland within its boundary. In the most recent StatsCan survey, it was revealed that the average income is less than \$40,000 per year. What would it be like to try to pay the utility bills, rent or mortgage, gas and car payments to get to work on that amount of money per year?

I want members to think about that amount of money, then think about tripling the carbon tax and putting up the cost of everything we buy, and then try to picture themselves in that situation. Canadians are living that situation every single day in this country. Members should ask themselves what it would be like to try to feed themselves and possibly their family on that amount of money.

All the while, costs are continuing to rise. If any member in this House is willing to support any additional taxes that pile more stress and suffering onto Canadians who are already having a hard

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time keeping their heads above water, it would be the opinion of the constituents in my riding that they do not belong in this place.

I will be voting to protect my constituents and all Canadians, as we cannot see the government force new taxes on a struggling Canadian society.

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the most interesting thing and the biggest display of hypocrisy in this place is when this member stands up and talks about the supply and confidence agreement between the NDP and the Liberals as though it is not something that the electorate voted for, while this member, in 2018, was elected as a provincial Conservative in New Brunswick, where they then formed a supply and confidence agreement with the alt-right party in New Brunswick. The hypocrisy is literally spewing off the Conservative benches right now from the member.

Could he somehow justify to this House and Canadians how he could be so critical of the Liberals and the NDP in this agreement, when—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, I will give the member a little history lesson. In 2018, there were 22 PCs elected in New Brunswick, 21 Liberals, three Green and three People's Alliance. We had no government. I was the 22nd member, and my seat came in four hours after everybody else's. We had to somehow form a government. We did not have one. There was no actual winner of the election. It took a few more weeks to organize.

It is the taxes the Liberals are putting on the backs of Canadians—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, since today we are doing a rerun of Tuesday's motion, I am going to do a rerun of the Conservative government when it talked about what smaller government looks like. It meant a cut to Veterans Affairs of a third of the staff, which has led to a backlog of 50,000 applications. It meant a cut to Phoenix's payroll staff when it brought in Phoenix and made a boondoggle of it: It has cost us billions of dollars instead of saving millions of dollars. It meant moving a senior's working age from 65 to 67, cuts at DFO, cuts at CBSA, and the denial of critical infrastructure in my riding. When the Conservatives refer to smaller government, they mean cutting services to people.

What services is this member going to cut when they go to smaller government, if they ever form a government in this country again?

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Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, here we have the NDP, which basically joined the Liberals, who were already in government, and now he is talking about cuts? What taxes are they imposing right now on Canadians, on home heating, on groceries, and tripling the carbon tax?

I mentioned the salary range in my region. The NDP-Liberals are crippling Canadians with these new taxes. We have no lessons to learn except that, yes, we will be the government. I am glad the member recognized that.

● (1320)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have risen several times today, which is not to say that I am loquacious, although I may not be far from it.

Each time, I have underlined the importance of having a vision for the future, rather than never seeing past one's nose. Unfortunately, my sense is that a tax reduction is not the answer. As my colleague has pointed out, we need to build more housing. Programs exist, but they are underfunded.

Why not have an opposition day about increasing funding to the programs and organizations that have already been approved? That would lower housing inflation because it would increase supply.

Why not have an opposition day asking for relief for farmers across Canada? Why this particular subject for an opposition day, instead of something long-term?

[English]

Mr. Jake Stewart: Madam Speaker, why is it that the NDP are joining the Liberals, yet condemning them every day? That is the question I have, as do most Canadians. The story here is that they are imposing a crippling tripling of the carbon tax on Canadians. They are destroying young Canadians' opportunity to buy homes.

Guess what we are going to do on this side of the House? We are going to give them back control of their lives and make Canada the freest country on earth. That is what we are going to do.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House today on behalf of my constituents in Chilliwack—Hope.

I will remind everyone that today we are discussing a motion that states:

That, given that the cost of government is driving up inflation, making the price of goods Canadians buy and the interest they pay unaffordable, this House call on the government to commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and pay cheques.

It is a pretty simple motion. Basically, we are asking the government not to make things worse. It has already gotten us to where we are today. The price of gas in my hometown in British Columbia is \$2.25 a litre today. That means a student driving a Honda Civic has to pay over \$100 to fill the tank to get to school. The cost for a mother to fill up her SUV is over \$135, and a contractor filling up their pickup has to pay over \$250 just for the fuel to get to work to conduct the duties they perform in our communities. In my community, that is often agricultural work. It is work done in the construc-

tion industry, work that cannot be done with a Prius, work that needs to be done with a truck.

My community is rural. It is a community where there are not a lot of rapid transit options. There are long distances between places people need to go to. However, the Liberals want to make the cost of gas, which is \$2.25, a record high, worse. They propose tripling the carbon tax next April.

B.C. has its own carbon tax. It has been a failure on every level. It has not reduced emissions; it has increased the cost of everything in British Columbia and, unlike in some of the other provinces in the country, there is no federal rebate. The money goes to Victoria to spend as it sees fit. It gives some of it back in rebates, but the rest of it goes into government coffers. This is just what the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated, that 60% of Canadians pay more in the tax than they get back in rebates. I would anticipate that in British Columbia it is at least that bad, but this is what the government wants.

It pays lip service every once in a while and pretends that it cares about these high gas prices, but that is actually what it wants. It wants the prices for Canadians to go up. It wants people who are driving their aged parents or grandparents to doctor's appointments to pay more for gas. It wants moms and dads who are taking their kids to after-school activities to pay more. We heard it in the House earlier this week. It is a market incentive somehow. It is trying to incent people to drive less.

In my community, people have to drive to get from place to place to place. The government disrespects rural Canadians. It disrespects people who need to drive to get from A to B. It also disrespects, quite frankly, people who need to heat their homes. It tells seniors that it is going to drive up the price of their home heating fuel, whatever that may be, natural gas or furnace oil, etc., and that it is going to triple the price of the carbon tax, further driving up the fuel price. It suggests that maybe they can do without, perhaps turn the heat off. Seniors can shiver so that the Liberals can put more money in government coffers. It is unacceptable, and Conservatives are calling on them to stop making it worse.

There are articles that we should all be aware of and be seized by: “B.C. soup kitchens, food banks struggling with increased demand, decreased donations”. We heard this yesterday in question period. The member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte indicated that former donors to a food bank have become clients, and, according to Food Banks BC, “the number of new clients accessing its 105-member hunger relief agencies has increased 50 per cent between December 2021 and March.” We are also seeing that the majority of Canadians are making changes to their grocery store habits amid higher prices. According to Bloomberg, almost a quarter of Canadians are cutting back on how much food they buy, because of higher inflation. This is more prevalent among female shoppers, such as single moms in many cases, with 29.6% of them buying less food, compared to 18% of men who are making that choice. It is not a choice, though; they are forced into it.

● (1325)

What do we see? We know that when the price of fuel goes up, which the government wants, as that was its policy change and the effect it desires, the price of transportation goes up, which means the price of the goods that need to get to a grocery store go up as well. We are already at a 40-year high in grocery inflation. It is up over 10% year over year, and growing at a rate that is at a 40-year high. We have not seen these numbers since the eighties.

The response of the government should simply be to stop making matters worse, stop raising the carbon tax and stop taking more money out of the pockets of workers through increasing taxes on their paycheques, which is what it is planning to do on January 1.

I have heard the Liberals now say that it is not a tax and that these are not taxes. Their website says they are taxes. The Government of Canada's website lists these as taxes because they result in lower take-home pay for Canadians.

Paul Martin thought they were taxes when he made it a priority to make the country more efficient and more competitive. He said payroll taxes kill jobs and drive down competitiveness. He got it, but he would not recognize the Liberal government today because it has abandoned all of its fiscal anchors. It has completely—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I wonder what Brian Mulroney thinks of that.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the member does not seem to care that the price of food has gone up for Canadians. He laughs when I bring up things about food banks. He simply cannot stand to hear the truth, and he wants to make it worse.

The member for Kingston and the Islands wants to vote to make gas prices higher. He wants to vote for less money in the pockets of Canadians. He can defend that, and I will defend cutting taxes and holding the line for Canadians.

If the member is not hearing from his constituents about affordability, that means he is not listening, which would put him in good company with the Liberal government. All of us on this side of the House are getting messages. A message I received said the following:

Budgets were tight and money was short before, and now with rental prices almost doubling, gas higher than we've ever seen, and grocery prices increasing, it is getting impossible to afford the bare necessities.

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Having a child, I'm not left with many options. I already have a second job, living in my car is not an option and moving back with parents also would not work so I'm not sure what else I can do. Will there be any solutions? I know I'm not the only one struggling.

For this constituent, the solution is not to have more money taken off her paycheque. The solution is not to have more money taken away from her when she has to fill up her car to take her son to school. She said she had to drop out of university because the affordability is so bad under the government.

Another constituent wrote:

My husband and I work full time [at] great paying jobs and we are still struggling. [We] can hardly afford groceries because the costs are rising in B.C. The fact that families cannot even purchase groceries without repercussions is astonishing to me. We are dual income...and we struggle. We don't spend on anything but the bare minimum necessities and even then sometimes we try to do without.

People are struggling and the government is threatening to make things worse. It is set to raise taxes on paycheques on January 1. This motion calls for it to stop that. It is set to raise prices on gas, groceries and home heating in April. We are calling on the government to stop those tax hikes.

We will be voting to protect the interests of Canadian workers and Canadian families, and to leave more money in their pockets, because they know how to spend it better than the wasteful Liberal government.

● (1330)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Chilliwack—Hope comes from a rural area, so he knows what a load of meadow muffins looks like, and that is what he has just delivered.

In British Columbia, the revenue from the price on pollution goes to reduce income taxes. We pay the lowest income taxes in the country in British Columbia. There has been no increase in taxes on gasoline, so how does he explain the fact that gas prices are \$2.30 and headed for \$2.50? I would suggest to the member that British Columbians and Canadians are facing the same situation as western Europe is facing with Russia. The oil companies are gouging us, and the sooner we cut these guys out of the equation, the better for everybody.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the member from British Columbia is not listening to his constituents. They are struggling, just as my constituents are struggling. However, he says that we have never had it so good, that at \$2.25 a litre, what is the big deal? To them it does not matter, and they are going to raise the price, which is what the Liberals are promising to do. They will triple the carbon tax, which will turn \$2.25 a litre into three dollars a litre under that member's plan.

The member can go back to Fleetwood—Port Kells and try to sell that. I will stand up for the people of Chilliwack—Hope to demand that these taxes not be raised.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are hearing all sorts of things today, just like last Tuesday. It is more or less the same. I am not even sure where to start.

Does my colleague realize that the oil companies are a price-fixing cartel and that lowering taxes will simply increase their profit margin?

Look at the current inflation. Analyzing the numbers, it is clear that their profit margin has increased. This is not just because of nasty government taxes. What we need to do is to redistribute money to people in need. I would like to have an answer to that, because I have tried and tried, yet I have not gotten any response.

In the past, people in the Conservative Party seemed to agree with increasing old age pensions starting at age 65. That is a concrete measure to increase the standard of living for people who are struggling on a fixed income. Enough with the populism and combining all sorts of issues. We need a clear answer to the question.

Will they agree to increase the old age pension for those who are struggling to buy groceries today, yes or no?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, of course, my colleague is wrong about the issue with gas prices. When governments across the country cut sales taxes or gas taxes in places such as Alberta, the prices plummeted overnight. The price per litre plummeted for people in those regions.

For people in regions like mine, we had another motion where we tried to get the GST cut on fuel and to suspend the carbon tax. Of course, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and Liberals all voted to keep gas prices nice and high, because that is actually what they want.

When we talk about the standard of living for seniors, in my riding, seniors who drive to see their grandkids or drive to their doctor's appointments are paying \$2.25 a litre. If the member wants that price to go up, he will have to come through the Conservative Party to make that happen.

• (1335)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, last November, the member's riding was devastated by an atmospheric river, which resulted in billions of dollars of damage right across B.C. I am just wondering when Con-

servatives will start talking about the inflationary effects of climate change.

Secondly, if the member is going to talk about the rising cost of food and fuel, but completely neglect the profiteering of large corporations and the profits they are making off the backs of working families, then that is some extreme cognitive dissonance. Will that member stand up for his constituents and join with the NDP to call out corporate profiteering to make sure that we are actually helping families?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, what would have helped in my region of the Fraser Valley would have been raising the dikes, not raising the carbon tax. We could have used multiple governments, including the NDP B.C. government, which had failed to invest in the infrastructure necessary to protect our communities.

My constituents are tired of hearing about fancy conferences around the world where they discuss raising the price of everything. They want to actually see investments in infrastructure that will protect our community. That is what Conservatives believe in. We do not believe in raising the price of everything through a carbon tax.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I could not be more opposed to this opposition day motion. I am not sure how they could pack more falsehoods into one short motion, but they have certainly done their best.

It is a privilege to rise in the House today to speak to this motion, although I am opposed to it. These past few years have not been easy with the pandemic and its impacts, and now we have the war in Europe and the rising cost of living. It is easy to point fingers and call out for quick solutions, but it is reckless to take advantage of the challenges communities across Canada and the globe are facing.

In recent years, climate change has had unprecedented effects on Canadians. Impacts from climate change are wide ranging, affecting our homes, cost of living, infrastructure, health and safety and economic activity. Of course, we have seen disruptions in our supply chains and how that contributes to inflation right across Canada in all of our communities.

The latest science warns that, to avoid severe impacts of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced significantly and urgently to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5°C. However, in taking action, it is no longer a question of choosing between our economy and climate action. It is well understood that the two go hand in hand and that the long-term health of our people, our planet and our economy depend on our taking ambitious climate action. That is what Canadians want to see. They want to see that from the government, and they want to see that from the opposition parties. They want to see us raising our level of ambition and not backing off and going backward, as the Conservatives would have us do, into the Harper era of inaction.

Let us look at some of the actions that our government is taking. In April 2021, the Government of Canada responded to the latest science by submitting a strengthened national emissions target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, in addition to its goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. In March of this year, the government released the 2030 emissions reduction plan, outlining how Canada will meet our 2030 target. The plan builds on a strong foundation, starting with Canada's first-ever national climate change plan in 2016 and then our strengthened plan, which was released in 2020. I could not be more proud of the work that this government did in consultation with provinces and territories right across the country in order to develop our climate action plan. The plan shows that we can build a cleaner economy while making people's daily lives better.

Carbon pricing is central to all of these plans because it is the most efficient and lowest-cost policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I know members on the opposite side do not believe that carbon pricing is the way to go, but there are many case studies and examples across the world that show it is by far the most effective system for incentivizing the type of behaviour we need to see and the type of innovation we need to see in order to get to a sustainable economy.

We have heard from stakeholders across the country that consistency and predictability are key to unlocking investments in the low-carbon economy. We also know that businesses and industries are developing innovative technologies and approaches to reduce emissions, including carbon capture. There are many other technologies out there. There are many renewable energy projects and things that we can be investing in. They need clear incentives and supports to put those technologies into practice. That is what our government's plan intends to do and is actioning.

Carbon pricing creates those incentives without dictating any particular approach. It lets businesses decide how best to cut their emissions. Let us remember that, if they do not pollute, they do not pay a carbon price.

At the same time, Canadians, especially the most vulnerable Canadians, are facing affordability challenges. We get that. The federal approach to carbon pricing is designed to maintain the consistency demanded by industry and investors while prioritizing affordability for Canadians. We know it is not enough to create a cleaner economy. We have to make sure that Canadians can afford it as well.

Business of Supply

• (1340)

It is true that carbon pricing of pollution is modestly increasing fuel costs, by about 2¢ per litre of gasoline this year. We know every bit counts, but carbon pricing has never been about raising revenues or raising prices on Canadians. In fact, under our plan, most households end up with more money in their pocket than they pay.

Wherever federal fuel charge proceeds are returned directly to households, eight out of 10 families get more back through the climate action incentive payments than they pay in direct carbon costs, meaning the system is helping with the cost of living for a majority of Canadian families.

Let us remember, just this July, Canadian families got the first quarterly payment, which was a double payment. In Ontario, they are getting \$745 this year, and they got half of that. I noticed that come into my bank account. I am sure many other members of the House and their families noticed that direct quarterly payment from the climate action incentive.

Members on the opposite side cannot claim that those dollars, 90% of those funds, are not going back to Canadian families, because they got those payments in their bank accounts.

It is lower income households that benefit the most. High income households tend to spend a lot more on fuel and energy, so they will face a net cost. However, the lowest income Canadians come out the furthest ahead.

For example, the average cost impact of carbon pricing per household in Alberta is expected to be about \$700 in 2022, but this is less than the average climate action incentive payment of about \$1,040 per family.

In Ontario, the average household cost is estimated to be about \$580, but households will receive back, on average, about \$710 to \$745. These estimates take into account the direct costs, like paying more for fuel, and also indirect costs, like paying a bit more for goods and services.

Families in rural and small communities are eligible to receive an extra 10%. Households can use these funds however they want. They can use them to absorb the extra 2¢ per litre of gasoline if they choose. Households that take action to reduce their energy use come out even further ahead.

Zero-emissions vehicles are an option, with federal purchase incentives helping reduce the cost. The federal government is also supporting home energy retrofits, through the Canada greener homes grant, to reduce energy used in the home, save money and cut pollution all at the same time.

Business of Supply

The Government of Canada has also committed to return proceeds collected from the federal output-based pricing system, or OBPS, to the jurisdictions of origin. Provinces and territories that have voluntarily adopted the OBPS can opt for a direct transfer of proceeds collected. Proceeds collected in other backstop jurisdictions will be returned through the OBPS proceeds fund aimed at supporting clean industrial technologies and clean electricity projects.

Climate change is a serious challenge, but it is also an opportunity, a very big economic opportunity. Canadians want to take advantage of the significant economic opportunities in the low-carbon economy. Analysis by the global commission on the economy and climate estimates that transitioning to a low-carbon economy will deliver a direct economic gain of \$26 trillion U.S. and generate 65 million new jobs globally.

Just as we are putting a price on carbon pollution, we are also making historic investments in clean technology, innovation and green infrastructure to drive growth and reduce pollution, including \$9.1 billion in new investments to cut pollution and grow the economy as part of the 2030 emissions reduction plan.

The 2030 emissions reduction plan, Canada's next steps to clean air and a strong economy, reflects submissions from over 30,000 Canadians, provinces, territories, indigenous partners, industry, civil society and the independent net-zero advisory body. The plan represents a whole-of-society approach, with practical ways to achieve emissions reductions across all parts of the economy.

Canada is not alone, by any means, in fighting climate change and pricing carbon pollution. Around the world, markets are changing, industries are moving away from products and services that create carbon pollution and are turning to cleaner and more sustainable options. The cost of inaction on climate change is enormous, and it is far greater than the cost of addressing it today.

• (1345)

As emphasized in the most recent IPCC report, the cost of inaction is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but the hon. member has run out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I have been listening to the debate today, I have heard a lot of stories of Canadians who are struggling.

A woman just reached out to me on my social media. She does not even live in my riding. Her name is Sarah. She says that she and her husband both work outside the home. They live paycheque to paycheque. They are embarrassed to admit that they have had to ask their parents for money to help pay bills.

They have to choose whether they will pay for food or home heating this month. They have to decide whether they will pay for power or water or what the least expensive sport is to put their kids in so they can have fun and learn a skill and a team sport.

How does the hon. member justify increased payroll taxes and the tripling of the carbon tax when it is burdening Canadians?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, what is most disturbing is that the Conservative Party of Canada does not take the climate emergency seriously.

What is interesting is that the Conservatives seem to purport to care about climate change, but put it at odds with the pocketbooks of people. In fact, we have to do both. We have to fight climate change, build a stronger economy and make life more affordable, which is exactly what our government is doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, at the start of the summer in my riding, we spent our evenings and weekends working very hard to deliver passports to Quebecers who wanted to go abroad. I think that was true of most Bloc Québécois members. Those of us in Quebec spent our weekends working very hard to do that.

Yesterday we learned that top federal public service executives received \$190 million in bonuses. These are the very same individuals who failed to deliver passports to people. MPs' office staff had to do their job for them.

Does my colleague think that money would have been better spent increasing old age security, building social housing or upping health transfers?

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I am not sure how this pertains to the Conservative Party's opposition motion, but I have seen the issues with passports and the backlogs continue to get better based on our minister's willingness and ability to take a lot of real-time feedback, address the concerns. We continue to hire new staff and ensure that the process in passport approvals and processing get better and better. Certainly, we can continue to improve upon that.

I am not sure what the member opposite is referring to with regard to manager's bonuses.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, since Parliament resumed, we have been hearing from the Liberals about EI and the importance of it. We know that Canadians are reliant on EI for many reasons, such as caring for children, their parents or sickness. There are a multitude of reasons that it is important.

Unfortunately, just recently, on September 24, the Liberals let the system lapse into its broken prepandemic norms. I am wondering if the member could share why the Liberals have let the temporary pandemic rules lapse without presenting a plan to improve the EI system in place.

• (1350)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I take that to be a good faith question. I am not sure of the actual lapse of which the member speaks, but I can assure her that our EI system is a very important part of our social safety net. As we have seen, our government believes in supporting that social safety net.

The Conservatives continue to call it a payroll tax, which it absolutely is not. When we contribute to our pension and we make contributions to employment insurance, those are benefits of which we get to take advantage. They are not a tax in the usual sense of the word.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Whitby is absolutely right that the carbon pricing is a critical element of any climate plan. However, we cannot allow today's debate to take away from the fact that we are nowhere near where we need to be to do our fair share to confront the climate crisis. One reason why is the federal government's insistence on giving public money to the very companies most responsible for this crisis.

What can he do to move the governing party toward proven climate solutions, like increasing investments to homeowners looking to retrofit their homes?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member, with whom I share a passion for fighting climate change. I appreciate the fact that our government continually needs to raise its ambition. I know the fossil fuel subsidies to which he refers are being phased out, probably not quick enough for the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader of the Senate.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to rise today to speak to this opposition day motion. I probably will not surprise members by saying that it is pretty much a non-starter for me, especially after one reads the first seven or eight words in the motion. It starts off stating, "That, given...the cost of government is driving up inflation".

Here we are, once again, with a misrepresentation of reality being proposed by the Conservative Party, by suggesting that inflation is something unique to Canada. Inflation is a global issue right now. All developed countries around the world are dealing with it.

Let me just refresh for the members what is going on in the world. Of the G7 countries, Japan's inflation rate is 3%; France is 5.9%; Canada is 7%; Germany is 7.9; the U.S. is 8.3%; Italy is 8.4%; and the United Kingdom is 8.6%. The average inflation rate in the OECD countries right now is 10.3%. For the Conservatives to come in here with their motion, saying it is the government's

Business of Supply

fault that inflation is where it is, is disingenuous at best and an outright misrepresentation of reality at worst.

Let us dig into why the Conservatives say that. What they are really saying is, and we will hear them say this from time to time, if the government had not spent all that money during the pandemic, we would not have inflation. What they are actually saying in reality, because all of the countries I listed did the exact same thing and are in the exact same position, is that if we had not spent that money during the pandemic, then we would not be in this position.

Therefore, what they are indirectly saying, and this is what the leader of the Conservative Party said about two years ago, is that they do not support giving Canadians the supports they needed during the pandemic. This is what their argument really comes down to even though it is very ironic that the Conservatives voted in favour of \$300 billion of that spending during the pandemic.

The Conservatives are blaming the government for the inflation problem that is going on right now globally. I would remind them that it is slightly ironic, because they have a tendency to say the Prime Minister is incapable of doing anything, yet somehow he was able to create global inflation. We will set that aside for a second.

The Conservatives are saying that we should not have allowed that to happen, but they voted in favour of the money that we spent during the pandemic. If they are suggesting that it was the increased spending that has driven inflation, they are in the exact same boat as this side of the House, the Bloc, the NDP, the Green and, indeed, governments throughout planet Earth, as the leader of the Conservative Party likes to refer to it as.

I want to dig into something more important, and that is this newfound interest the Bloc Québécois has in calling out the Conservatives for the populism that is on full display right now. I want to hand it to my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, especially today. A few times today they seem have jumped on board with the rest of the House, except for the Conservative Party, calling out the populist approach the Conservatives are taking. It is the populist approach we have seen in the House for the last year and a half. It is the same approach the Leader of the Opposition took during his leadership campaign. Indeed, it is the same approach they are taking now. What do populous individuals do? They suggest outlandish ideas to garner support from vulnerable people in particular.

What did the Leader of the Opposition do just six months ago? He showed up to buy a shawarma and paid for it with Bitcoin. He offered Bitcoin as an actual viable alternative to using the Canadian dollar. If he went out today and bought that same shawarma, he would effectively be paying \$22.35 for that \$10 shawarma he bought six months ago. Is that a viable alternative to the Canadian dollar?

Statements by Members

● (1355)

The leader of His Majesty's loyal official opposition in the House of Commons in Canada has made the suggestion that Bitcoin should be a viable alternative. I think it is absolutely ludicrous that we cannot even get the Leader of the Opposition to state his official position on it now. I have asked the Leader of the Opposition three times in this House since he was elected as the leader what his position is on cryptocurrency, and if he could come clean and tell Canadians if he still believes that Bitcoin is a viable alternative. He would not even bring himself to utter the words "Bitcoin" or "cryptocurrency".

I have asked other members from the Conservative Party the same question today. I asked if they would at least just say the words "Bitcoin" or "cryptocurrency". It is like they have completely removed the words from their vocabulary. They absolutely refuse to even talk about Bitcoin and cryptocurrency, let alone the fact that the leader of the official opposition only six months ago waved around a shawarma, with his phone in the other hand, while he paid in Bitcoin for that shawarma. Now where is he? He is absolutely silent on the issue. In my opinion, it gives Canadians an opportunity to reflect on their position.

They have been heckling me almost from the beginning because they do not want to hear this. I understand that they do not want to talk about this issue. I get it. It makes perfect sense. Why would they want to talk about this when the centrepiece policy of the Leader of the Opposition has absolutely taken a 180° turn and gone in a different direction? I can understand where they are coming from, but I also think they have an obligation to explain to Canadians why they have taken this position on cryptocurrency, and more importantly, why they are absolutely silent on it now.

I think it is high time that the leader of the official opposition came into the House and explained this to Canadians, especially those Canadians he recommended Bitcoin to six months ago, who may have taken his advice and purchased it, and who would now have seen their life savings devastated. He owes it to them to come into the House and explain his position on cryptocurrency. He cannot wait for it to just go up and down, and pick and choose when he wants to talk about it based on where it happens to be. He owes it to Canadians to give them an explanation and I hope he does it soon.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

*[English]***OVARIAN CANCER AWARENESS**

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. More than 3,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer this year. I know the impact of this terrible disease on the families and loved ones of those fighting cancer. A very special person in my life is a fighter, and every fighter's story is an inspiration to all of us.

Many researchers and advocates in Canada are determined to save lives, and I want to commend their hard work. I also want to

thank all Ovarian Cancer Canada volunteers in Brampton and across the country for working to raise awareness.

Supporting researchers and raising awareness saves the lives of women. Together, let us build a bright future for women, because there simply is no time to wait when it comes to ovarian cancer.

* * *

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this second annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, 2022, has been historic for the Siksika Nation in Bow River.

The ambition of the Siksika people is reflected in their legendary late chief, Chief Crowfoot. A fierce warrior, wise diplomat and chief among chiefs, Crowfoot was steadfast in his negotiation of Treaty No. 7 in 1877 between the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Crown. His ceremonial regalia from the signing was on display in an English museum for decades. This spring, it was returned to its rightful home at Blackfoot Crossing, the site of the signing of Treaty No. 7.

Direct descendant Chief Ouray Crowfoot, together with his council, led the campaign to return the regalia. Growth and progress in Siksika Nation, like taking control of policing and a future palliative care facility on the nation, are tangible actions towards self-determination, reminding us that reconciliation is a shared agreement to live and prosper together.

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*[Translation]***INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS**

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus, which is October 1.

Canada and Cyprus have maintained a historic relationship since 1960. Our two countries have developed a strong partnership with respect to our membership and our work in multilateral organizations, such as la Francophonie, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the World Trade Organization and UNESCO.

[English]

Canada's relationship with Cyprus extends beyond words. Since the inception of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus, over 25,000 Canadian Armed Forces members have been deployed and 28 killed in an effort to maintain peace on the island.

This year underscores the importance of Canada standing by its partners and commemorating their pursuit of democratic values and liberty. Moreover, there is a need for Canada to support its friends as they struggle against occupation, tyranny and violence.

Canada applauds the Cypriot people's achievements and seeks to maintain close ties into the future.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 1 is the International Day of Older Persons.

It is an opportunity to recognize their diversity, but also to collectively reflect on their place in our society. In this inflation crisis, let us recognize that those on a fixed income are directly affected and need to see an increase in their old age security pension starting at 65.

Let us not leave them in a precarious financial position. We should also allow those who want to remain in the workplace to do so and give them some tax breaks. The Liberals prefer to impoverish seniors 65 to 75 so they will be forced to stay in the workforce.

In the Bloc Qu b cois, we are saying that seniors need to be treated as the driving forces behind their community. We owe them respect. They shaped Quebec. The benefits of intergenerational ties and active aging are being proven every day.

Let us take a day to reflect on everything that seniors bring to the table. We have a duty to treat them with the utmost consideration and ensure that their social safety net allows them to age with dignity.

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● (1405)

MOISSON ESTRIE

Mrs.  lisabeth Bri re (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rising cost of living is hitting Canadians hard. With our plan to make life more affordable, we are seeking to limit the effects of global inflation. Our support also includes continued funding for community organizations, which are essential to the well-being of Sherbrooke residents and the development of the social economy.

This is true of Moisson Estrie, which distributes food supplies to over 50 organizations in my region. I would like to congratulate Christian Bibeau on his recent appointment as executive director. With rising food prices and labour shortages, there will be plenty of challenges for him to meet during his tenure.

Let us continue to support organizations like Moisson Estrie, particularly through the local food infrastructure fund, so that they can help more families in need.

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[English]

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 150,000 first nations, Inuit and M tis children were placed in residential schools. The experience was devastating and has left generational scars on so many. The children were removed from their families and their cultural traditions, and forbidden to speak their languages.

The purpose was supposedly education, but assimilation was top of mind. It was a “government knows best” approach, and the government was wrong. The legacy of Indian residential schools has

been a great deal of brokenness, pain and loss. My father, my aunts and my uncles attended residential schools. Dad served in the Canadian military for decades. He kept silent about being M tis until he left. Because of societal prejudice towards Indians, he was hesitant to be identified as one.

Tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day to reflect, to pray for healing and to rebuild bridges with indigenous peoples.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge): Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight Pickering councillor Bill McLean, who is retiring this year and will not be on the ballot after 22 years of service.

Councillor McLean and I served on council together for about 10 years of his 22-year career. Councillor McLean and I did not always agree on issues. In fact, we had a few fiery meetings together, but it was actually the wise intervention of our government House leader, who knew us both, that helped us to realize we were more aligned than we thought. Am I ever glad he did, because Bill became one of my closest friends and earliest mentors.

Working with Bill was truly inspiring and an honour. He is a man of integrity, and as a former Toronto police officer, his vow to serve and protect is at the core of who Bill is. He taught me so much about service, how to fight for my community and how to be a voice for the voiceless.

Council will not be the same without him, but selfishly I am hoping to be able to spend more time with my friend and his wife, Diana. Family is what Bill loves most in this world, and I am so glad he will have more time with his.

I thank Bill for his service to our community.

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NAVRATRI

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Brampton East and across Canada are celebrating the Hindu festival of Navratri.

I am grateful to be able to rise in the House today to share my gratitude and appreciation to so many friends and neighbours in Brampton East who invited me to join in their festivities. Navratri is a time for dancing, prayer, reflection and celebration, all of which I had the pleasure to be a part of.

Statements by Members

At its core, the shared message of Navratri is the triumph of good over evil, which is something all Canadians collectively value in various ways. When we take an active effort and allow knowledge to outweigh ignorance, it bridges the gap between communities and people.

I hope everyone has the opportunity to learn more about Canada's vibrant Hindu community and its considerable contributions to the advancement of Canada's economic and social prosperity. I look forward to attending further events in Brampton East over the course of the festival. I would like to wish everyone celebrating a very happy Navratri.

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COST OF LIVING

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The residents of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte are no exception to this crisis. A recent article in Barrie Today quotes Sharon Palmer, the executive director of the Barrie Food Bank. The article says that the rising cost of fuel, rent and food has resulted in a rising number of people accessing their services.

Ms. Palmer stated, "everything we...buy is more expensive right now". She noted that the food bank is now seeing individuals returning to use the food bank that they haven't seen in several years. Another trend the executive director has seen is residents who historically donated to the food bank now using it for food themselves.

I would like to thank all the workers at food banks across Canada for supporting residents during this affordability crisis. I would also like to reassure Canadians that help is on the way. The new leader of our Conservative Party is committed to assisting Canadians. Our leader offers hope. He will stop all proposed Liberal tax hikes, allow Canadians to keep their hard-earned money, fight to keep inflation down and make life affordable again.

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● (1410)

HURRICANE FIONA

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the wake of hurricane Fiona, people in Newfoundland and Labrador's west coast communities, like other Atlantic Canadians, are suffering in the aftermath, but together they are managing the devastating damage left behind.

Fiona ripped homes from foundations, wrecked public and private properties, collapsed buildings, washed out roads and took down power lines, leaving shorelines soaked in debris. Saddest of all, it robbed lives from loving families. Our deepest condolences go out to families that have lost loved ones in this hurricane.

In the aftermath of Fiona, we are also witnessing the true kindness of Newfoundlanders, Labradorians and Canadians: neighbours helping neighbours, over 800 Canadian Armed Forces troops on the ground working hard and hydro crews from other regions helping restore power. Canadians are stepping up to support, with food and

clothes donations and over \$10 million in disaster relief donations to the Red Cross, which our government will be matching.

As the Prime Minister and our government have recognized, the road to recovery is a long path and there is a lot of work to do, so please join me in offering support to all of the people who need it today. Let them know we will be there to support their communities and families as they restore and rebuild.

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CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

The carbon tax is an utter failure. We know this, and there are two ways to measure it. The first is whether it has reduced emissions. It absolutely has not. The second is whether it puts money back into the pockets of Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been unequivocal on this. Most Canadians lose money as a result of the carbon tax, yet the Liberal government is pushing forward with tripling the carbon tax by April 2023. I guess the environment minister and the Prime Minister are experiencing the carbon tax differently than average Canadians.

Help is on the way. A Conservative government, led by our new leader, will cut the carbon tax.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put the people first: their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

Today, people feel like they have lost control of their pocketbooks and their lives. The cost of government is driving up the cost of living. The Liberal government has doubled our national debt, adding more debt than all previous governments combined.

It is simple. This expensive government is costing Canadians more. The more the Liberals spend, the more the price of everyday essentials goes up. What is the result? Families downgrade their diets to cover the 10% year-over-year jump in food prices. Seniors delay their retirements and watch their life savings evaporate before their eyes. Thirty-year-olds get trapped in 400-square-foot apartments or, worse, their parents' basement. Why? It is because house prices have doubled because of the incompetent Liberal government.

Statements by Members

Many are falling behind and there are people in this country who are just hanging on by a thread. These are the citizens of our country. We are their servants. We owe Canadians hope.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people to pay my respects and commemorate those lost as a result of our nation's colonial past.

Tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, an opportunity to reflect on the tragic history of colonialism and the intergenerational impacts of residential schools.

On a day such as this, I often talk to my children about the responsibility and the importance of working towards reconciliation.

Tomorrow, let us all take the time to think about how we can walk the path of reconciliation in our daily lives.

Whether from a family that came to this country generations ago or a recent immigrant, it is up to each one of us to listen, learn and work to right the wrongs of the past.

• (1415)

[English]

RECONCILIATION

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): [Member spoke in Inuktitut as follows:]

Inuktitut text describing reconciliation efforts and the impact of residential schools.

[Inuktitut text interpreted as follows:]

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge Raymond Ningeocheak and his family living in Nunavut.

Crimes, ignorance and neglect by governments continue to this day. We are the parliamentarians who can help stop the process of colonial laws. We must be the parliamentarians who transform our work from empathy to action. Reconciliation must reflect the needs of indigenous people.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is important for me to rise today to commemorate the National Day for

Truth and Reconciliation. This is a day for remembrance and reflection, for acknowledging our present and thinking of the future we will build.

We cannot forget that reconciliation will only be possible once we have uncovered the truth. This means that reconciliation calls on us to objectively learn about the past of indigenous nations, a past at once so near and so distant, a past that still causes pain. Reconciliation also calls on us to understand this past, because we must work together with respect and trust to do the healing work that is required.

On behalf of myself and the Bloc Québécois, I want all indigenous nations to know that they have our full and complete commitment. We hear them, we understand them and they will have our unwavering support.

Tshinashkumitin.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to add my voice to those who condemn the oppression of the Iranian government against its innocent people.

We stand with the Iranian people. Protests have been unleashed over the last several weeks as a result of the morality police murdering a young woman, Mahsa Amini, because she dared to confront the Iranian regime and fight for her freedom. These protests against that action have been nothing short of inspiring.

The Conservatives, including my deputy leader, have been proud to join in these protests. For years, the Conservatives have demanded the government to hold the Iranian regime accountable. Unfortunately, the government lifted sanctions on Iran as one of its very first actions. The government still refuses to list the IRGC, a terrorist organization, as a terrorist body, allowing it to legally operate here in Canada. The Liberals claim they cannot do this, even though CSIS has reported that the IRGC is responsible for shooting down PS752, killing 50 Canadians.

It is time for accountability. The Conservatives will fight to restore it.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION**

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the second annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day recognizes the over 150,000 first nations, Inuit and Métis children who were forcibly separated from their families and their communities, and the immeasurable loss of language, culture and identity. This is a day to honour the survivors and their resilience, and to mourn the many children who never returned home.

This day also coincides with Orange Shirt Day, inspired by the childhood story of Phyllis Webstad, a residential school survivor from the Canoe Creek Indian Band in British Columbia. Her grandmother gifted Phyllis an orange shirt to wear on her first day at St. Joseph's Mission Indian Residential School. When she arrived, her new shirt was forcibly taken from her.

I call upon all Canadians to reflect on this painful legacy of colonialism and on our historical responsibility to seek truth, ensure accountability and walk the path of reconciliation. I urge everyone to wear an orange shirt and to stand in solidarity with first nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada today and every day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the Bloc want to punish Quebecers for the crime of driving a conventional car by tripling the carbon tax.

The federal government is currently blocking the production of green electricity in Quebec for electric cars. The Quebec government wants to build dams to produce this green energy for electric cars, but federal red tape will block these projects.

Why does the government not cut the red tape, let Quebec build these environmentally friendly dams and, at the same time, get rid of the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians, including Quebecers, clearly understand one very important thing: The Conservatives do not have a climate plan. That is a very big Conservative failure.

We understand the importance of taking climate action, Quebecers understand the importance of taking climate action, and that is what we will continue to do.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after seven years in government, the Liberals have no climate plan. What they have is a tax plan that has failed to reach a single solitary environmental target they have set. Meanwhile, gas prices have hit \$2.40 a litre in Vancouver. This is the same city with the third most overpriced real estate market on earth. In other words, people cannot afford to drive, they cannot afford homes and,

with food prices rising faster than in 40 years, they cannot afford to eat either.

Will the government show some compassion for British Columbians and Canadians and cancel its plan to triple the tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not have a climate plan. All they have is a plan to take away \$1,000 cheques from families in Alberta and Saskatchewan. They do not have a plan to make life more affordable for Canadians either. All they have is a plan to drain our pensions and our EI.

Our government has a fiscally responsible plan to support Canadians with affordability, and we have a plan to act on climate. Canadians know that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only one draining EI of money is the government. It wants to raid the EI fund for \$10 billion to take the money that Canadians pay in EI taxes and spend it on everything but EI. The minister admits that she is going to raise EI taxes by \$2.5 billion starting on January 1, with Canadians facing the highest inflation in 40 years, just inflation.

With Canadians struggling to feed themselves, what is the government thinking by raising taxes on paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we look past all the huffing and puffing, all the strutting and posturing, here is what happened this week. The Conservatives have done a U-turn and accepted our targeted and fiscally responsible plan to help 11 million vulnerable Canadian families with GST rebates of nearly \$500.

Now it is time for the Conservatives to drop their utterly reckless scheme to drain our pensions and EI, and support our plan to help Canadians pay their rent and take their kids to the dentist.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been draining the paycheques and pocketbooks of Canadians. Just this week, the Angus Reid Institute published a poll showing that 51% of Canadians are struggling to eat. In Canada, a G7 country, the majority of people cannot afford groceries. That is from seven years of the Liberal government.

Canadians are out of money and the government is out of touch. Why will it not cancel its tax hikes so that Canadians can afford to eat?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know who is out of touch? The people who are out of touch are in a party that believes it is a good idea to slash our pensions and undermine the EI system. What else is out of touch? It is out of touch not to have a plan to act on climate. Why is that out of touch? It is because our customers, our clients, the U.S. and the EU, are taking climate action and will only buy Canadian products if we take climate action too.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister totally ignored the question. Fifty-one per cent of Canadians cannot afford to eat. Food bank use has tripled and hits records every single month, according to the Daily Bread Food Bank. Students are living in homeless shelters while they study. This is Canada after seven years of the current Liberal government, and it is getting worse now under this costly coalition.

Will the Liberals wake up to what is going on in this country and cancel their heartless tax hikes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to protecting vulnerable Canadians. Our government has lifted hundreds of thousands of Canadian children out of poverty with the Canada child benefit. We have lifted seniors out of poverty by increasing the OAS and by reversing the ruthless, cruel Conservative pension cuts.

Do they know who owes Canadians an apology? It is this new Conservative leader, who recklessly advised Canadians to destroy their life savings by investing in Bitcoin.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Roxham Road is a many-headed beast of a challenge because of the sheer numbers, the Liberals' failure on the humanitarian front, finding jobs for people, cultural integration, health care and education, but tens of millions of dollars' worth of contracts have been awarded privately without a bidding process, especially to generous Liberal donors. Therefore, I would echo the ethics committee's request that the government table all privately awarded contracts relating to Roxham Road.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister agree to that?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope and I believe that there is one very important thing all members of the House agree on: Immigration is important to Canada and Quebec; it is important to our economy.

That is why our government believes in the strength of our immigration system, of our asylum system. We will continue to work with all our partners internationally and in Quebec.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that all members of the House agree that Roxham is not a labour issue, but a humanitarian one. Let us then start

Oral Questions

over: Will the Deputy Prime Minister make sure that, as requested by the ethics committee, all the unredacted contracts awarded privately, in particular to generous Liberal donors—which brings back memories—are tabled, analyzed and, if necessary, denounced?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the Roxham issue is about our common border with the United States. That is why we are taking this matter very seriously. We are working with our American counterparts on issues related to our common border, including the safe third country agreement. We are working closely with the stakeholders involved to resolve the situation at our border and we will continue to do so.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, later today I will be meeting with Autumn Peltier, a global indigenous water activist and a fierce defender of water and her people. She launched a petition that has gained over 100,000 signatures, calling on the government to address the water crisis in indigenous communities.

Tomorrow is truth and reconciliation day. How can the government defend its record when so many indigenous communities still do not have access to the basic right of clean drinking water?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member opposite for that very important question and for recognizing that tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We all recognize that Canada is an amazing place, but we are a country with an original sin, and that original sin is the treatment of indigenous people in Canada. Our government is working very hard and very sincerely towards reconciliation, and I think all Canadians are. We recognize there is more work to do, and we are going to keep on working hard.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Autumn Peltier launched this petition to get this government to address the water crisis in indigenous communities, because this government broke its promise.

Tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. How can the government defend its record when so many indigenous communities still do not have access to clean drinking water?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very important question.

I believe that reconciliation is a key issue for Canada, and I am sure that all members in the House feel the same way. It is not just a political and social issue, but a moral issue as well.

Our government is working wholeheartedly to invest a great deal in reconciliation. We recognize that there is more work to do, and we will keep working on it.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing all parties should agree on, it is the fact that Canadians should have enough to eat.

Unfortunately, four in five families have had to cut their food budget because of inflation. The government could have chosen to help Canadians directly. Instead, it committed to tripling the Liberal carbon tax as of April 1. That will have a direct impact on food. Canadians are already struggling as it is.

Could the Liberal government make the right decision and cancel this Liberal carbon tax hike, which is three times too high?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the cost of living and affordability are major concerns for Canadian families. That is why we are going ahead with inflation relief payments.

I am very pleased that, ultimately, the Conservatives agree with us and have announced that they support our plan. It is now time for the Conservatives to do another political U-turn and support the other elements of our plan.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to political U-turns, we are looking at the masters. They formed government seven years ago, and boy, have they broken election promises.

They said the country would run three small deficits. That is one promise broken. They said they would not run a deficit in 2019. That is another promise broken. Now they are announcing that they are going to triple the Liberal carbon tax.

I am going to be a good sport today. Could the Liberals break their promise to triple the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is time to get serious about the big issues facing our country.

I believe that we need climate action, and I hope that all members of the House will agree. As Minister of Finance, I understand very well how important climate action is to our economy. If we do not create a green economy, it will be impossible for Canada to succeed in a green world.

• (1435)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling to make ends meet under the Liberal government. In B.C., the cost of gas is now over \$2.25 a litre. The cost of groceries has skyrocketed to a 40-year high.

The Liberals are set to make things worse. On January 1, the government is planning to increase taxes on paycheques, ripping money from Canadians' pockets and stuffing government coffers instead. Why will the Liberals not give Canadians a break from just inflation and just cancel their planned tax increases instead?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the challenges facing Canadians on affordability are extremely important. That is why the government has acted to, for example, double the GST tax rebate to provide relief for Canadians who are struggling with inflation, which is a global concern.

With respect to the price on pollution, the hon. member knows full well that the rebates that are provided to the vast majority of families in this country are more than they actually pay. I would suggest to my colleague, who comes from the same province as me, British Columbia, that the price on pollution in British Columbia is a British Columbia-made price on pollution. It was implemented long before the federal system, because British Columbia was a leader in fighting climate change.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the B.C. price on pollution, as the minister calls it, has not reduced emissions, and the rebates do not go back to British Columbians. They go to the NDP government in Victoria. What he would see is the tripling of the carbon tax, which would result in the \$2.25 going to \$3 a litre. We will never accept that.

Why will he not cancel the tripling of the carbon tax and stop gouging British Columbia families?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member that if he has a problem with the fact that British Columbia does not rebate the money back, he should have a conversation with Premier Horgan. At the end of the day, the rebate system that is in place wherever the federal backstop is in place provides more money back to people than they actually pay. The vast majority of Canadian households receive more money back.

With respect to his point about not reducing emissions, I suggest he look at some of the academic studies, including one from Duke University, which show that it actually does reduce carbon emissions.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know Liberal logic claims that the carbon tax will reduce emissions, but the reality is that the Liberal carbon tax has had no meaningful impact on the environment. The carbon tax has succeeded only in driving up the costs of food, fuel and home heating. While their tax hikes dive deeper into the pockets of Canadians, it is more than just inflation that is making it even harder to make ends meet.

Will the Prime Minister abandon his carbon tax hike, or is his goal truly to make the most basic necessities unaffordable?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say that certainly the issues of affordability are extremely important to every member in this House and to all Canadians. That is why the government has acted to address affordability issues.

With respect to some of the statements regarding the price on pollution, I suggest that the hon. member do a bit more homework. There are 45-plus countries around the world that have implemented a price on pollution. Virtually every academic study tells us that it is the most effective and efficient way to reduce emissions. In Canada, emissions dropped by 9% in the last reported study, so what she is saying in the House is simply not true.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, quite regularly, when I ask questions in this place, it is typical for a Liberal member to mansplain me and tell me what I need to do.

Despite imposing a costly carbon tax on Canadians, the Liberals have failed to meet every single climate target that they set. The Liberal carbon tax has done and will do nothing for the environment. The only achievement of their carbon tax has been to drive up the cost of living and make basic necessities unaffordable. It is more than just inflation soaring. Canadians simply cannot afford the Liberal government.

If the Prime Minister cares about affordability, will he cancel tripling the carbon tax?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Conservatives cared about affordability, they would have voted in favour of the unanimous consent motion yesterday that would have seen hundreds of thousands of Canadians with disabilities lifted out of poverty by moving forward with the Canada disability benefit. If they cared about lifting people out of poverty and making life more affordable, they would help kids with disabilities have access to dental care, and if they wanted to make life more affordable for low-income Canadians with disabilities, they would vote for rent help.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the human trafficking going on at Roxham Road would disappear immediately if the federal government suspended the safe

third country agreement. However, the minister is doing exactly the opposite. He is expanding it. He is building a city.

Radio-Canada recently reported that the federal government is not suspending the agreement, but rather expanding its facilities in response to the record number of asylum seekers this year. The government is set to open a new complex on November 1, and it will stay open until 2026.

How much longer does it plan to help human smugglers expand their business operations at Roxham Road?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times now, we had a very solid agreement with the United States to work together on this very complex issue.

There are pressures at Roxham Road. That is why we continue to work with the Government of Quebec. We are investing in additional resources at the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP.

We have to recognize that there is no one solution to this issue. We must continue to work together.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Public Safety said that he was very proud of the work the government is doing to protect the rights of refugees at Roxham Road.

What is he proud of? Is he proud that families are being exploited by criminal human smugglers and that it is costing them \$10,000 a head? Is that a good price? Is he proud that these families are being welcomed to Canada by the police? Is he proud that their applications take years to be processed?

Of all the things I just mentioned, which part is the minister most proud of?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the refugees who are continuing to do their part on the front lines. I am proud of the refugees who are helping to alleviate the labour shortage, not just in Quebec, but across Canada. There are plenty of examples of positive contributions made by refugees.

We will continue to invest in the necessary resources to resolve the situation at Roxham Road. The Bloc Québécois needs to stop complaining in the House and start coming up with real solutions. That is how we can work together.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have only been telling them for three years now to suspend the safe third country agreement. If that is not a solution, I do not know what is.

Oral Questions

Let us talk about the negotiations with the U.S. They have been going on for a long time. This was in the Liberals' 2019 electoral platform. They said they would continue to work with the United States to modernize the safe third country agreement. At this point, we are entitled to wonder if it is actually being discussed.

Meanwhile, the federal government is opening new facilities at Roxham Road.

When will the government suspend the safe third country agreement instead of holding ribbon-cutting ceremonies at Roxham Road?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we make it our duty to protect Canadians and secure our borders. At the same time, asylum seekers must be treated with compassion, and they have a right to due process.

The safe third country agreement is an important bilateral tool for handling asylum claims at Canada's land border. We are in constant contact with the U.S. government on issues related to our shared border, including the safe third country agreement.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister may want to consult the Government of Canada's financial literacy website. The section called "Tax basics" lists the types of taxes Canadians pay: income tax, GST and, yes, the federal payroll taxes of EI and CPP. Despite the finance minister's protests, her own website clearly states that these are taxes.

Any tax hike, including raising payroll taxes, only serves one purpose: to take money out of the pockets of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his planned tax increases on Canadian paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just said that our CPP and EI contributions only serve the purpose of taking money out of the pockets of Canadians. Let us think about that for a minute. That is absolutely reckless. We contribute to the CPP so our seniors can have pensions when they retire. Not everyone is a member of Parliament. Not everyone has the pension that the members opposite and members on this side of the aisle enjoy. We need to be responsible. Canadians rely on their pensions.

• (1445)

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to "Justinflation", northerners' paycheques are already running out before the end of the month.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I am going to have to interrupt. That is being dragged out a little too much. It is doing indirectly what you cannot do directly, so I want to remind hon. members to try to keep some decorum in the chamber and not mock each other. It is just not parliamentary.

The hon. member will please continue.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, thanks to inflation, northerners' paycheques are already running out before the end of the month. Food prices have increased. Gas prices are through the roof. Heating costs are skyrocketing. Housing projects have been cancelled due to massively increased construction costs. Now, instead of providing relief for northerners, the current Prime Minister is planning to increase paycheque taxes.

Will the Prime Minister answer my question? Will he cancel his planned paycheque tax increases, yes or no?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question, because if there is one thing for certain that we have done it is to be there for the people in northern Canada. During COVID when we knew there was a crisis around food and heat security, one of the first things we did was step up to provide the extra resources they needed in each of their communities to get them through that process. We have been there for them through COVID. We have been there for them before that, and we will be there for them today and tomorrow.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister answers every question with mock bewilderment that we dare question her record levels of spending and the increasing taxes to pay for them. She seems obsessed with Stephen Harper, whose record is clear: In 2015, just seven years after a global economic meltdown, the Liberals inherited a balanced budget.

Our Conservative government had lowered virtually every tax that Canadians could pay and Canada's middle class had become the richest in the world. How things have changed.

Could the minister tell us if Canada's growing affordability crisis is due to just inflation or is it just incompetence?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that Canada is pursuing a fiscally responsible policy. We have the lowest deficit in the G7. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio and our AAA credit rating was reaffirmed this year. Canadians also know that we need to be compassionate and support our neighbours with affordability. Finally, they know that now is not the time to eviscerate our pensions and eviscerate our EI.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, indigenous communities deserve justice and a chance to heal from the legacy of residential schools. The government promised \$200 million in funding for burial site searches but has delivered less than half of that money. It is shameful that the government is denying indigenous communities the funding needed to search for their lost children and for vital mental health supports.

When will the government provide the funding indigenous communities were promised to bring these children home?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned two days ago, 91 projects are under way in communities, to a total of about \$100 million. The vast majority of people who have applied to our department have been funded for the first two years of their projects. We will be with them for the complete trajectory of where they will need to do searches, which may be well over five to 10 years. It is something that we will keep doing and keep investing in as communities approach us.

There is much more work to do, indeed, but clearly there is more money to come and this is only a small snapshot of the investments, particularly into mental health, that have been put into communities. Only part of my department does—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous people in my riding of Edmonton Griesbach and across Canada are overrepresented in the houseless population. The ones who do have housing live in overcrowded homes or homes in dire need of repair.

Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that homes are now 67% more expensive than what the average Canadian can afford. The government is failing to help indigenous people, who have been hit hard by the housing crisis. Before the next budget, will the Liberals fully fund the “for indigenous, by indigenous” housing initiative that the government promised?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. We are committed to a “for indigenous, by indigenous” urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy. That is why, in budget 2022, we invested more than \$4 billion to close the gap that exists in indigenous communities. This includes a \$300-million initial investment in an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

Even in existing programs, we are seeing programs like the rapid housing initiative, in which 41% of the housing is being led by indigenous people and being delivered in indigenous communities. I look forward to working with our partners to get this right, by following the “for indigenous, by indigenous” principle.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 23, the National Summit on Indigenous Mental Wellness, a first-of-its-kind event, brought together hundreds of participants to share best practices to support first nations, Inuit and Métis mental wellness.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services update the House on the outcomes of this important summit?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City for his really hard work on reconciliation.

Just last Friday, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and I hosted a first of its kind, a mental wellness summit bringing together indigenous leaders from across the country doing phenomenal work on mental wellness and substance use recovery. We hope that this is the first of its kind. It really was about indigenous groups sharing best practices and learning from one another in a positive environment, and I am so excited to share those great programs with the rest of the country.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members have spoken every day in the House about what we are hearing in our ridings. We hear terrible stories about the cost of living. More and more Canadians are going to food banks. Mothers have to make painful choices. Young students have to sleep in shelters. Winter is coming, and families will have trouble heating their homes.

We are asking the Prime Minister to have a heart and show some compassion. Could he scrap his plan to increase taxes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the cost of living is high for Canadian families and for Quebeckers. That is why we brought in the Canada child benefit for families, which has lifted 450,000 children across the country out of poverty.

It is simple. If the Conservatives are truly concerned about poverty and about the people who are suffering right now, they will support our efforts to help the most vulnerable.

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Winston Churchill once said that trying to tax your nation into prosperity is like trying to stand in a bucket and pull yourself up by the handle.

If the Prime Minister is being honest, he would admit that the carbon tax is just that, a tax that does nothing for the environment but is designed to provide his government with buckets and buckets of cash from the wallets of Canadians.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister cancel his plan to triple the tax on everyday essentials like gas, home heating and groceries?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in difficult times we should all evoke the memory of Winston Churchill who, in difficult times, said what was hard, told people straight what was difficult and offered real solutions to those problems. We are in difficult times right now, and what this country deserves are real solutions.

What we are hearing throughout this question period and over the last two weeks are games and rhetorical rhetoric that, frankly, are not contributing to the solutions we need. Our government is committed to helping those in need, and we certainly will continue in that direction.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government loves taxes. Payroll taxes are going up. The carbon tax is tripling with 8% price hikes. It is not just inflation. The cost of everything is going up.

Will this government have mercy on Canadian families and axe the taxes?

• (1455)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly the issue of affordability for Canadians is one that concerns every member of the House. This government has acted to ensure that we are addressing the affordability issue.

With respect to the price on pollution, if we asked 100 economists, 99 will tell us that it is the most efficient way to reduce emissions and incent innovation. It is a market-based approach. Market-based mechanisms are something the Conservative Party used to believe in and, certainly as recently as 10 months ago, every member on that side of the House campaigned on putting into place a price on pollution.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a majority of Canadians pay more in carbon taxes than they get back from this government. That means the rising cost of groceries, home heating and filling the car up with gas will only get worse as this government proceeds to triple the carbon tax.

Will the Liberal government back down from its harmful plan to triple the carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians expect their leaders of all political stripes to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. We certainly have to address affordability pressures while we concurrently continue to address the existential threat that is climate change.

We need to take into account the cost of inaction. A report released yesterday said that the cost of not acting would be up to \$25 billion per year by 2025 and \$100 billion by 2050, with 500,000 jobs lost. Taking action on climate change is about addressing affordability for Canadians, particularly for younger Canadians.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Conservatives are saying and what the Prime Minister said when he was in opposition, employment insurance is not a payroll tax.

However, any cunning opposition party can turn the situation to its advantage as long as there are people who contribute to EI without being entitled to collect it. Such opposition parties have also been able to take advantage of the fact that no government, be it Liberal or Conservative, has taken action in the past 25 years.

When will the minister finally reform the program to make sure it does not leave 60% of people who lose their jobs out in the cold? We want to know when.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that EI benefits need to be more fair, more responsive and more adaptable to the needs of Canada's ever-evolving workforce. That is why we are committed to delivering a full-scale modernization of Canada's EI system. We look forward to launching our long-term plan to improve the EI system.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when? It is irresponsible to delay the reform that has been promised for three elections now, and it is even more irresponsible to allow temporary measures to expire, knowing that there is no reform.

The minister is changing the eligibility rules at the end of the season for many seasonal industries. In the meantime, what happens to the workers who qualified at 420 hours last Saturday, before the minister raised the bar to 700 hours?

Their industries are shutting down for the winter and they are looking at a black hole, or worse, a vacuum, before them. What would the minister have them do?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although some temporary benefit programs offered during the pandemic are ending, regular benefits will continue to be available to workers, just like before the pandemic.

We look forward to launching our long-term plan. As I told my colleague, that will happen before the end of the year. It will be a very specific plan to improve employment insurance.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation when we honour the children who suffered in residential schools and reflect upon those who never made it home. It is also a time to redouble our efforts to provide first nations with a better future, clean water, an end to poverty and the autonomy for those willing nations to control more of their money, their land and their decision-making.

Will the government discuss with the House how we can move forward together to achieve these goals?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to see the Leader of the Opposition's ambition in this space, because that is exactly what we have been showing since 2015, an ambition to move forward on reconciliation. He hits all the high notes. We are talking about things like truth, equity and self-determination, things that we know are going to ensure a brighter future for first nations communities and individuals across the country.

We have done a lot. There is a lot to say and I certainly cannot cover it in 30 seconds, but I look forward to working with the party opposite to ensure we reach those goals together with indigenous people.

* * *

● (1500)

TAXATION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government and inflation are driving up the cost of living, especially for rural Canadians.

Mike, a senior living in my riding, wrote to me on Monday, saying that over the past year, his rent has increased by 50%, fuel costs are up by 40%, his medications are up 22% and his food costs are up by 12%. Like many Canadians, Mike is struggling under the burden of the government's taxes on basic necessities and the idea of tripling the carbon tax.

Will the Liberal government cancel its planned tax hikes on gas, groceries and home heating today?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that we need to be there for Canadians who are facing increased rent. That is why we introduced the Canada housing benefit, which is already providing an average of \$2,500 to renters across the country who are struggling with the cost of rent.

However, we are not stopping there. We have introduced a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit of \$500, which will go to help an additional 1.8 million Canadians. What are the Conservatives doing? They are playing procedural games to delay that legislation which will enable Canadians to receive that help now.

Oral Questions

What the hon. member can do is talk to his colleagues to make sure that we pass this important legislation to get rental help to Canadians today.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Deb, a constituent, found out she was being evicted from her affordable apartment due to Liberal inflation. She worked her whole life as a nurse, caring for others in need. Now, on a disability pension in her early sixties, she has no home security and a limited income that is being consistently eroded by new Liberal tax grabs.

Will the finance minister give Deb hope and dignity for a future where she can afford a home or will she condemn Deb to poverty in her senior years by tripling the tax on gas, heat and groceries?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to remind everyone in the House that we have a historic moment in front of us right now to come together and support the Canada disability benefit to lift hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of poverty, make life affordable for them and give them the dignity in which they deserve to live.

I know we can do it together, because I have heard everyone in the House say they want to do it, so let us do it.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the second National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It is an opportunity for Canadians to look back on Canada's historical relationship with indigenous peoples and to reflect on the path to reconciliation that lies ahead.

Can the minister tell the House about the measures the government has taken to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, including the creation of a national council for reconciliation and the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages? Can he explain why this is a crucial step toward reconciliation?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is not easy. It is neither linear nor free, but we are determined to right past wrongs and address their impact on indigenous peoples, an impact that is still felt today.

Tomorrow, we encourage all Canadians to reflect, to listen and to show compassion for indigenous voices. Tomorrow is a day for residential school survivors and indigenous communities and leaders to have their say.

Bill C-29 will respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 53 to 56, while also promoting the implementation and independent review of the 94 calls to action.

Oral Questions

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as of September 19, Toronto police have recorded 31 homicides out of 302 shootings this year. Recent victims of gun violence include a Toronto police officer killed in a shooting rampage and a 17 year old who was killed in broad daylight in Scarborough. The vast majority of these shootings are conducted by repeat offenders and drug traffickers with illegal guns. What is the Liberal solution? Remove Chrétien and Trudeau Sr. mandatory minimums and target law-abiding hunters and firearms owners.

Considering these disturbing statistics, will the government remove its soft-on-crime Bill C-5?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, serious crimes in the country will always carry with them serious consequences. Indeed, the crimes the hon. member is talking about do attract serious penalties.

What we would be doing with Bill C-5 is entirely the opposite. Failed Conservative policies on tough-on-crime, with minimum mandatory penalties and no possibility of conditional sentence orders, have only clogged the justice system with less serious cases that have resulted in the over-incarceration of indigenous, Black and racialized people in our system.

We are removing those to spend more time and more resources precisely on the offences about which he is talking.

• (1505)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we know exactly how the justice minister thinks.

Recently he told the Senate that he empathized with dangerous drug dealers, because they were only trying “to put bread on the table.” I am not making this up. Violent crime is out of control, proving the Liberals' hug-a-thug policy does not work.

While Canadian cities and communities are being terrorized by gangs and gun violence, the government refuses to hand out maximum penalties for these terrible crimes.

When will the minister abandon his soft-on-crime policy and start locking up dangerous criminals?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. member to actually look at the transcript of that Senate hearing. If he believes an indigenous woman with a problematic addiction, who is trying to keep bread on the table for her three children, sells some prescription drugs on the side and then gets tackled with a minimum mandatory penalty, is the kind of serious offender we need to lock up for that period of time, I would suggest he is absolutely wrong.

Bill C-5 would allow us to allow people like that mother to get the help they need, all the while spending more time, judicial resources and penal resources on the serious drug traffickers.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the streets of Montreal are like a violent video game where the mission is to shoot anyone and anything.

Last week, a mother was taking a stroll with her partner in Longueuil when they were gunned down by a drive-by shooter. In response to this violence, what is the Prime Minister doing? He is proposing legislation that eliminates mandatory minimum sentences and reduces sentences for serious crimes in Canada.

Can the Prime Minister ask the families of the victims what they think of Bill C-5?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a Quebecker, I am a Montrealer, and I am aware of what is happening in Montreal, both in my riding as well as in other ridings in Montreal.

Our goal with Bill C-5 is to increase resources to deal with serious crimes, which will always have serious consequences. With Bill C-21, we are increasing the maximum penalties for firearms offences.

We are moving in the right direction to get tough on the crimes that deserve it.

* * *

[English]

CHILD CARE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pan-Canadian early learning and child care system is up and running from coast to coast to coast with all provinces onside. In British Columbia, parents would be able to work, contribute to the economy and make life more affordable for themselves, thanks to our federal government's investment in child care.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update the House on the progress being made to date in my home province of British Columbia?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be my pleasure to provide the House with that update.

First, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her tremendous years of advocacy on this issue. I was in Vancouver and Burnaby last Friday with the provincial government to announce of doubling of \$10-a-day spaces in British Columbia, as well as savings of up to 50% by this December for families in registered child care. That is up to \$6,600 a year for families in British Columbia. That is making a real difference in their lives.

I am excited about working with British Columbia and supporting families.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on International Safe Abortion Day, the Prime Minister said that he was committed to upholding “a woman's fundamental right to choose”, but here is the thing.

The Liberals have yet to end charitable status for crisis pregnancy centres that help spread misinformation on abortion care. They promised to do it. It is in the Minister of Finance's mandate letter, but they still have not done it.

Instead of patting themselves on the back about how pro-choice they are, when will the Liberals act to remove charitable status from centres that mislead and shame women?

● (1510)

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our message is clear: The right to an abortion and access to abortion go hand in hand. Every person in our country should have access to safe, equitable and consistent health care services.

In Canada, universal access to abortion is guaranteed under the Canada Health Act. We will continue to advocate for a woman's right to choose.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, in my community and across the country, we are in a housing crisis, yet our housing market encourages corporate investors to treat homes like stocks, making huge profits on the backs of regular people. The federal government could remove tax exemptions for corporate investors tomorrow instead of bragging about studying the issue.

When will the Minister of Housing ensure homes are for people, not commodities for investors to trade?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the issue. That is why we have already implemented a 1% annual tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian residential real estate. We are introducing a two-year ban on foreign investment in Canadian residential real estate. We are committed to reviewing the tax treatment of real estate investment trusts. We are launching a federal review of housing as an asset class.

On this side of the House, we are committed to making housing more affordable by doing our part to tackle the financialization of housing.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. When I was trying to ask a question, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan started heckling me. I know it is difficult for him to control his toxic masculinity, but I think people across Canada expect a lot better.

The Speaker: I am going to take a deep breath and remind all members to please, when they are addressing each other, address each other with respect, regardless of what is done to them or what

Business of the House

is said. We want to keep as much decorum and respect in the chamber as possible.

I also want to remind hon. members that when somebody is asking a question or answering, they should not shout them down. That is not a polite way of acting.

There are two apologies that should come out of that, but I am not going to touch either one of them. We will continue.

The opposition House leader has a question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (House leader of the official opposition, CPC): I have a very important question, Mr. Speaker. Can the hon. government House leader update the House as to the business of the House for next week?

I will point out that when the House leaders were given the calendar for next week, there were a couple of open days. I will make the suggestion, as the government House leader prepares his response to this question, that either one of those empty days would be a perfect opportunity for a piece of legislation to cancel the tripling of the Liberal carbon tax.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, let me thank the member opposite and all Conservative members for their support in advancing Bill C-30, which is critical support at this time on the issue of affordability. I want to thank them for helping to move it to committee and for their work to move it through committee. It will be our priority next week to ensure that those critical supports are passed.

In response to the question of whether we will cease taking action on climate change, I note we will never stop fighting for this planet. We recognize that the climate and the economy are intricately bound. However, I would suggest, as my hon. colleague has suggested, that we have critical supports for vulnerable people. An example is Bill C-22. It needs to be adopted so that those who are disabled in this country can be lifted out of poverty. I would suggest there are families that need dental care, and that is covered in Bill C-31. I would suggest there are people who need support on housing, and that is also covered in Bill C-31.

The good news for the member opposite is there are many ways he can help as we work through the affordability crisis that is hitting across the globe.

On Monday, we are going to continue with second reading of Bill C-31, which I referenced earlier. It is an act respecting the cost-of-living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing.

On Wednesday, we will call Bill S-5 concerning the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Business of Supply

I would also like to inform the House that next Thursday shall be an allotted day.

* * *

• (1515)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during Statements by Members, just before Oral Questions, the member for Nunavut made her statement in her mother tongue.

Her statement must have been very interesting, but, unfortunately, I was unable to understand what she was saying. There was English interpretation, but not French.

I deplore this situation, and I hope it will be fixed before next time. I believe that my privilege was infringed, as was the privilege of many other members.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for his intervention. We will look into what happened, and we hope to fix it for the next time. I thank the member for pointing this out.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MORATORIUM ON NEW TAXES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I spent eight minutes prior to question period trying to inform the Conservatives that inflation was a global issue. However, it did not seem to resonate with them, because they spent the entire question period talking about “Liberal” inflation and inflation as though it were a problem unique to Canada.

The reality of the situation, which I honestly believe the vast majority of Canadians understand, is that inflation is a problem happening throughout the world right now. It is not going to be dealt with by using cheap antics, like the Leader of the Opposition buying a shawarma with Bitcoin, which would have cost him the equivalent of \$10 Canadian in March and would cost him \$22.35 today. The reality of the situation is that we are going to deal with inflation and the effects it is having on Canadians by working with Canadians, by bringing supports to Canadians and by introducing numerous pieces of legislation. As the House leader indicated just moments ago, we will be focused on them next week and in the weeks to come.

The Conservatives have an opportunity here. They can be onside with the rest of the House and work together with us to support Canadians, or they can continue the games and antics that we have been seeing up to this point.

I think it goes without saying that I certainly will not be supporting the motion put forward by the Conservatives today. I really hope they have an opportunity to reflect on their role in this House and will start bringing forward issues, policies, ideas and motions that will genuinely have an impact on the lives of Canadians.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member believe that there are initiatives being proposed by the government that will help mitigate the rising daily costs for people in his community and for Canadians as a whole? What types of initiatives can we offer Canadians to help mitigate some of those costs?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely do. We can look at the initiative that this government has brought forward with respect to increasing the GST rebate for six months. On that issue, I heard Conservative members early on in the debate talk about the inflationary impacts, yet if we talk to any economist out there, they will report back that the inflationary impacts of that particular program are next to nil. It will not have an impact on inflation.

While the Conservatives continue to try to scare Canadians into trying to support them, as we have seen day after day, we will be focused on providing supports for Canadians that will have a genuine impact on their lives so that we can help them get through this time of inflationary impacts we are seeing throughout the world.

• (1520)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy join in the debate.

Does the member not realize that tripling the carbon tax will have a disastrous effect on the most vulnerable in our society? I get emails from people all the time who are now going to food banks. Food bank use has more than tripled in many cities across the country. With this carbon tax increasing by three times to \$170 a tonne by 2030, does he really not think that it is going to have a cascading effect on the affordability crisis, which has been created by inflation and by the Liberals?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for taking one for the team, because it appears as though no other Conservative wanted to get up to ask me a question. I appreciate him doing that.

Nonetheless, once again, he referred to it as “Liberal” inflation. It is global inflation, and out of the G7 countries, we are the third lowest in terms of the inflationary measure.

How the Conservatives can get up time and time again to talk about inflation as though it is a problem unique to Canada absolutely gets me. By the way, as a piece of advice for them, the vast majority of Canadians realize this. I do not know who they think they are speaking to when they continually repeat that over and over, but Canadians do not believe what they are saying.

Business of Supply

The member asked me specifically about the price on pollution, or the carbon tax, as he refers to it. What the Conservatives continually leave out of that discussion is the fact that Canadians get back, through the climate action incentive rebate, the price they pay into it. By the way, the only provinces that are impacted by that price on pollution are the provinces that have not stepped up to do their part. Unfortunately, the province I live in, Ontario, is one of them. However, members can look at British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which all have programs in place and as a result do not have a price on pollution.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we agree on the fact that the Conservatives' motion is completely out of touch with reality. The Conservatives are conflating premiums, social programs, retirement investments and taxes.

On the subject of taxes, is it not true that the Liberals are lagging behind and that they are not getting on with taxing the superrich, billionaires, CEOs, all the major oil companies and grocery chains that are using global inflation as a pretext to hike prices and line their pockets?

When will the Liberals do something about this?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the sentiment of the comment. As a matter of fact, I had a great conversation with the member for Kitchener Centre earlier today about this exact issue and about the fact that perhaps we should be looking toward oil companies, which are receiving record-high profits right now, as an opportunity to bring in taxes, similar to what we did for big banks and other organizations.

I respect the question by the member from the NDP. He suggests that perhaps it is taking too long. I will not necessarily disagree with him on that, but I hope that the NDP and the Liberals can work together, because it is clear that some of the other parties are not interested in making sure that policies like that are put in place.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will be my absolute pleasure to split my time with the great member for Thornhill.

It an honour to be in the House today to address the affordability crisis that is gripping Canadians across our land, from coast to coast to coast, including in my great riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Milton Friedman once said, “Many people want the government to protect the consumer [but the] much more urgent problem is to protect the consumer from the government.”

This is particularly true today, as the Liberal government is driving up the cost of living. For two years now, the Conservative leader has been pushing the government to put people first and to start fighting inflation. However, inflation continues to rise, at this point, over 7%. Canadians are feeling that pain.

Today, I am honoured to call on the government, along with the rest of my colleagues, to scrap its planned tax increases, including

the payroll tax hikes slated for January 1, and the tax hike on gas, groceries and home heating scheduled for this April.

To give some context to the opposition motion, I think it is important to understand the relationship between the government and the economy.

A fundamental principle, which must be the bedrock of all political discussions of the economy, is the indisputable fact that wealth or prosperity is created by the businesses and workers of our communities. It is through the production of goods and the delivery of services that a country adds value to the economy. When the country increases its ability to produce goods or to deliver a service, or, in other words, enhances its productivity, that country, by definition, becomes wealthier and its people more prosperous.

A country can temporarily and artificially increase its economic performance through the printing of money or quantitative easing. However, this is always short-lived, and the consequences are nearly always worse than the initial increase in improvement in the economic times.

What happens with this government spending, is that some of it wasted, of course, but some of it hits Canadians' bank accounts. When this money hits the bank accounts, what happens to that money is that, by the time it is available to be spent, the cost of everything has increased. The illusion of the windfall is quickly taken away, and we see we are left with nothing but inflation.

The true path to a more prosperous nation, a wealthier Canada, a more successful Canada, is through productivity. In fact, enhancing productivity is really the only way that this affordability crisis will be cured. When we improve productivity, we increase real wages. We increase real profits, and we create jobs. Unfortunately, the government appears to be doing everything it can to reduce the productivity of Canadians.

There are at least three significant policy directions that the government must reverse course on if it really is serious about tackling the affordability crisis. The government must cap its spending. Excessive spending is eventually paid for either through taxation or inflation, which reduces the ability of our productive sector to make things competitively, be profitable and be prosperous. Worse yet, it continues to drive inflation.

Who ultimately pays the cost of inflation? It is not the wealthy in our communities. It is not the super rich. It is not the government. It is our workers, our workers who are going out there.

I ask members to think of the worker who is earning \$50,000 a year. They are already subject to a high rate of taxation. Now, they have seen inflation eat thousands of dollars away from their real buying power. These are people who are already struggling to get by. Thomas Sowell famously wrote that inflation is one of the biggest and oldest forms of taxation.

Business of Supply

The effect of our government's overspending is to starve the productive sector, or the private sector, of resources. Those resources are needed.

If one listens to my friends in the NDP, one will hear them say that those monies are just wasted on yachts and wealthy billionaires, and I am sure there is probably some of that. The reality is that the majority of that money is invested back into businesses.

Right now we are starving Canadian businesses of the ability to reinvest. We are dead last in the OECD in capital investment. For every dollar that the U.S. invests in capital investments, we are investing 43¢.

That is the money that is building our businesses in the future. These are the dollars that will make us competitive in the future. We are losing ground at a tremendous rate every single day. That will make our economy less productive and every worker less effective. It will impoverish our country today, as well as tomorrow.

• (1525)

The government must commit to no further tax increases. Tax increases, and it is simple and as plain as day, by very definition, increase costs for workers and for consumers. That will drive inflation. In fact, do not take my word for it.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to ask questions of the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem. I asked him if the carbon tax was a driver of inflation and he unequivocally agreed. In fact, he said that it was a significant driver of inflation. I think all sides of the House would acknowledge that we are in an affordability crisis. We are at really high rate of inflation and that is making life more difficult for Canadians.

We would think the Liberal government would understand that the carbon tax at its current rate is driving inflation, so it should pause the carbon tax or maybe reduce it, but the government is taking the unthinkable action of tripling the carbon tax, which the Governor of the Bank of Canada has already said is fuelling the fire of inflation. Now it is going to triple it. It is really unthinkable.

Further, with every new tax increase, we are taking away the rewards and incentives of hard work. When entrepreneurs go out and put their whole lives on the line, risking their homes and families' futures, they need to be rewarded. When those workers work 20 out of 24 hours to ensure their families are fed at the end of the month, they should be rewarded for it, and they need to be incentivized. Because of our progressive tax systems and the clawbacks that exist in our current system, middle-class wage earners, and even low-income Canadians, are facing income tax rates of 30%, 40% or 50%. It is not fair that Canadians who are working the hardest should have to pay an exorbitant amount of taxes. This is really unconscionable.

Once again, what has been our Liberal government's response to that? It is going to increase taxes. The Liberals are going to dramatically increase the payroll taxes. This is not fair to Canadians. It also is detrimental to our economy. If we take away the rewards, the very dollars that people have worked so hard for, we reduce the incentive and the rewards for which these people have worked so hard.

Finally, we need to invest in those sectors of the economy that are extremely productive. We have a huge productivity gap. Productivity is measured by the contribution to the GDP per hour worked. Currently, Canada is at \$50. Contrast that to Switzerland at \$60; the United States at \$65; and Ireland at \$85. However, we do have sectors in the economy that are doing exceptionally well. In the oil and gas extraction sector it is at \$664 per hour. To make life more affordable for Canadians, we need Canadian energy.

It is inescapable that we are all dealing with the consequences of these failed Liberal economic policies. Perhaps no problem is as pressing as food inflation. This is creating challenges for Canadians from coast to coast. According to Statistics Canada, 20% of Canadians are utilizing food banks. Life is getting more challenging for Canadians. Many are experiencing these incredibly difficult economic challenges: inflation is at near highs, rising interest rates and punitive rates of taxation. The government, however, has the opportunity to reduce people's pain, to give them some hope by cancelling their proposed and planned tax increases on gas, home heating and groceries as well as on paycheques.

It is time that the government stops blindly following its ideology and actually help Canadians by cancelling its proposed tax hikes.

• (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives consistently talk about getting rid of the price on pollution. In Winnipeg North, 80% of the constituents who I represent have a net gain. They are receiving more money because of the price on pollution and the credit that follows, yet the Conservatives try to give the impression that the residents of Winnipeg North are being financially penalized.

How would the member justify telling this to Canadians who are affected by the price on pollution, such as in Ontario and the prairie provinces? Those are the provinces where there is the federal price on pollution, yet they are receiving 80% more money than they are contributing. How would he square that?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would not take a politician's word for it, but I would take that of the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, who has said that 60% of Canadians pay more in carbon tax than they receive in rebates. Quite frankly, that is the experience of those in my riding.

I can tell the residents of Winnipeg North that, if we were to form government, we would reduce their burdens. We would truly have their backs and get the Liberals' hands out of their pockets.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would appreciate an answer to my question. As I said in my speech this morning, I am surprised that the Conservative Party does not have more to say about the free market. We know that businesses are charging way too much and that the existence of oligopolies and monopolies has a huge impact on consumers. We know that this is a problem.

Yes, inflation is having an impact on the marketplace, but why target taxes when we could address free market issues directly and strengthen the Competition Bureau?

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I very much enjoyed working on the public accounts committee with the member. I always found her thoughtful.

I will say that, from Milton Friedman to Thomas Sowell, it is clear from history that, throughout the numerous inflation crises this world has experienced, including the last one under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, it is nearly always a government issue, either because it was printing too much money or taxing too much money. In this case, the government is doing both.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South is quite concerned with the carbon tax. It is recognized by leading economists as the most efficient way to act on the climate crisis. It went up by just 2.2¢ this past year.

Meanwhile, the federal government has announced a new \$8.6-billion tax credit for carbon capture and storage, a technology that has led to increased emissions 32 of the 40 times it has been implemented around the world. Is the member not similarly concerned about this amount of public funding going to carbon capture? Would he not want to see that go toward proven climate solutions?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am mindful of the public accounts committee where I asked the environment commissioner if the government had hit one single emissions target. The answer was a clear no. What is the signature policy of the Liberals to get emissions down? It is the carbon tax. The proof is that this policy is failing.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it very amusing that the member from the Green Party would say that they can solve a crisis by creating another crisis, a financial crisis. I would ask my colleague what his thoughts are on the tripling of the carbon tax when, on top of that tax, most people are also paying GST. What would he say about that?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the government's punitive policies, particularly on farmers and agriculture, are going to worsen a food crisis that is around the corner. Whether it is restrictions on fertilizer or increases to the carbon tax, life is getting tougher for farmers, which means food is going to get more expensive. The world needs Canada's food. We need to enable and empower our farmers.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across the country, Canadians are struggling. They are struggling with 40-year highs in inflation. They are struggling with the highest interest rates in the G7. They are struggling with the highest housing prices on record. Gas, groceries and home heating are not luxuries. They

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never have been, but they are getting further and further out of reach for Canadians, and that is an indictment of a government that stands in this place every day, claiming to understand the pain of Canadians while simultaneously raising taxes on them.

Over and over again in this House we have called for the government to cancel all planned tax increases, including the payroll tax hikes planned for January 1 and the tax hikes on gas, groceries and home heating planned for April 1. Today we do it again, as I stand in this House on behalf of those in Thornhill and Canadians across the country to support the motion that would commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and paycheques.

I hope this is a wake-up call to a government that continues to tell Canadians that they have never had it better and that this is an entirely global problem. Imagine that in 2008, during the last financial crisis, anyone in the House had risen in their seats and told Canadians that there was no problem here and that the whole world was facing the issue, so we should not be all that concerned. They would then give some platitudes and say something arbitrary. Imagine the backlash. The good news back then was that we were better positioned to be able to bring forward an economic action plan that had Canada last into the recession and first out, and that is not going to be the case.

Talking more about statistics on debt-to-GDP ratio and credit ratings, which we have heard as a justification for these tax increases, is simply out of touch. Credit ratings do not buy gas. Credit ratings do not buy winter jackets. Credit ratings do not buy workboots. Credit ratings do not buy the things Canadians need, and now Liberals want to add to that struggle. They want to take more of Canadians' hard-earned money. They want to ignore the well-being of everyday people who desperately need relief.

I hear it. I am sure they do too. The Liberals want to divide people and call them names, and perhaps the Liberals might understand that those actions have consequences, but given today's debate I am not sure they do. I do not know how to classify the Liberal tax plan as anything other than a tax plan, although I think we have heard countless references to words like contributions, funds or taxes by another name.

Like almost all members in this House, I hear from constituents every day whose kids cannot afford a home, who cannot afford to get to work and who cannot afford to feed their families nutritious diets. We need to ask ourselves whether more taxes are the real solution to this affordability crisis. Is doubling down on the same approach that got us into this mess the way to get us out?

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The Liberals and the NDP say yes. The Conservatives say no. Canadians pay a vast amount of their income taxes to the government, and only the Liberals, and the NDP as their dance partners, would think that this number needs to go higher rather than lower. If the government was at all in touch with the economic reality, it would know we cannot tax our way to balanced budgets, we cannot tax our way to prosperity, and more spending is not going to get inflation under control.

If the debate in the House is about what is or is not a tax, I thought I would share a few ways the government is actually taxing Canadians, making life harder, because that seems unclear to the other side today.

On paycheques, the finance minister admitted that she wants to raise EI premiums by \$2.5 billion and not even fund EI. CPP premiums are on the rise, and payroll taxes on the average Canadian worker are about \$700 higher than they were when Conservatives left office.

In the energy sector, Liberals imposed a carbon tax. It started at \$30 a tonne. Then it was \$40. Now it is \$50. They promised Canadians before the election that it would never go higher, but we should have known better, because the environment minister's plan is to triple the carbon tax to \$170 a tonne. The Liberals are tripling the carbon tax. That is times three. We will pay three times more than we do now. The Liberals want to add an extra 40¢ a litre to gas to go with the 40-year high in inflation. They tell Canadians they get more than they pay, and that is not true. The Parliamentary Budget Officer agrees.

● (1540)

Worse, emissions in this country have risen every single year, except for the year the country was shut down. Tripling the price without even making a dent in emissions and presenting that they are returning that money to Canadians does not make a whole lot of sense.

On tax credits, the Liberals promised a rebate for all consumers forced to pay their punitive carbon tax. However, this year the average household in Ontario, where I am from, pays \$360 more in carbon taxes than it gets back. There really is no justification. It does not work. They pay more than they get back, and it is going up by three times.

On food, the Prime Minister has increased the taxes farmers pay and decreased the output they produce. Let us not forget it comes at a time when the world is hurting for crops and agricultural products, and now struggling families across Canada are paying record prices for staples like bread, meat and vegetables. Tripling that carbon tax makes everything that needs to be transported even more expensive.

Let us not forget about the inflation tax, the invisible tax eating away at Canadians' paycheques that was brought on by seven years of inflationary deficits and reckless spending. The government knew this would happen. It is not like there was not a warning. We knew that creating cash and running deficits causes inflation. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Carleton, has been saying so since 2020. The Liberals told us that interest rates would stay

low. They told us that the carbon tax would not go up. They told us that the problem was deflation, not inflation.

Do we not have record inflation? Do we not have a plan to triple the carbon tax? Are we not experiencing some of the highest interest rate hikes since the 1990s? This has confirmed what we knew all along, that we cannot rely on the government to manage the nation's economy, and we cannot trust it with workers' paycheques.

Canadians need relief, but it is clear that the government, once again, is going to keep us on the wrong path, and that it has no plan to take us off it to put us on the right one. I have actually been a part of federal budgets before, at a time when they were balanced, the last one that was balanced actually.

What the Liberals proposed last spring was a book of words. It did not have a plan. It did not even have a vision for the future of our nation. Then they voted down our plan to scrap the carbon tax. They nixed the motion to scrap the GST on gas and diesel to help struggling Canadians, and they refused to act to bring down the price to buy a home, or frankly commit to any meaningful housing stock to build more. To this day, Liberals refuse to rein in the inflationary federal spending, driving that number up and not down.

Like I said at the beginning of my speech, Canadians are struggling, and judging by the debate in this place, it seems like Conservatives are the only ones listening. I am sure Liberal members are having the same conversations in their ridings as I am in mine. Our job is to turn that struggle into hope. Whether it is about travel restrictions, punitive vaccine mandates, taxes, the economy or anything else, we are the ones proposing solutions, unlike what the government accused this side of the House of not doing, and we are fighting for Canadians.

Our motion on the table addresses inflation at its core by putting a stop to the out-of-control tax hikes and reckless spending. It is not just me asking for this motion to pass, but also Canadians from coast to coast. Seven out of 10 people say that money is a major issue for them, and 53% of people say they are within \$1,000 of insolvency. Canadians are using food banks, 51% of them, and students are living in homeless shelters while they study. Those are facts.

To bring back optimism, to again make Canada the economic engine it could be in the world, Canadians can be assured that we will be here every day to ask the hard questions about why this is happening in this country, to put our ideas forward and to advocate for the millions left behind. We are laser focused on the economy and taxes, because it is too important to the country not to be.

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It is time for the Liberals to put people back into their plans when they think about tripling the carbon tax or when they think about raising taxes on Canadians. It is time to let Canadians finally keep their hard-earned money. It is time for the Liberals to answer the millions of Canadians calling for relief, and supporting this motion would give Canadians the relief they are asking for. I hope members of this House agree.

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the deputy leader of the Conservative Party the same question I have repeatedly asked the leader of the Conservative Party. What is the Conservative Party's position on cryptocurrency?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, 40-year highs in inflation and taxes that are going up on January 1 and on April 1, and this is what the member opposite is talking about. His constituents ought to see this. Instead of voting for tax relief, instead of voting to cancel the tripling of the carbon tax, he is talking about cryptocurrency. That is a shame.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard the Conservatives go on and on and on about the cost of everything, but it is clear they know the value of nothing in this House. If they did, if they were really serious about workers, they would not be trying to attack pensions, employment contributions and in particular the co-pays. If they were truly concerned about putting money in the pockets of everyday people, they would be supporting our efforts to raise the actual wages.

• (1550)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Demand the workers' unions.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, we hear them heckling across the way, but does the hon. member not agree that the quickest, best and most sustainable way of putting money into the pockets of everyday workers is by improving their wages and not taking away their employer co-payments?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, it must be a rude awakening that the leader of the member's party is not invited to their own convention for people his party used to represent in Saskatchewan. It used to be the party of workers.

Taxes on Canadians' paycheques have gone from \$3,400 to \$4,100. It is a \$700 increase. If the member does not understand that is too high and Canadians cannot afford it, I am not sure what his party represents.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

We keep hearing the Conservatives talk about cost increases, but they want to bring in a tax on home heating and a tax on groceries.

I may have some solutions for my colleague: increase the purchasing power of seniors, who live on essentially fixed incomes, provide direct financial support to low-income people, or bring in a support program for those most affected by the sudden rise in gas prices, which is threatening their livelihoods, including farmers, taxi or Uber drivers and truckers.

What does my colleague think?

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is going to be tripled. Not only can Canadians not afford it, but it actually does not work. It does not reduce emissions. It is not a solution. It is not a climate plan. It is a tax plan. The member opposite ought to understand that.

We are open to solutions that will actually help people. We have brought forward a solution to help people, and that is to stop the tax hikes the government is planning for January 1 and April 1. That will put more money back in the pockets of Canadians, and that will put us on the right economic path, not the wrong one.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned quite a few truths in her speech. One of them was the broken promises of the Liberal government, one of them being that the Liberal Party had promised not to raise the carbon tax to exceed \$50 a tonne, which seemed to not be true.

We also do not hear anybody saying that there is GST being collected on top of the carbon tax. When we hear the Liberal rhetoric that “you get back more than you pay”, would my hon. colleague agree that is a disingenuous statement?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that 60% of Canadians in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario get less than they pay for the carbon tax. It does not work. It does not reduce emissions. The Liberals actually voted against scrapping the GST off fuel costs. We had that opposition day. They already opined on that. The GST on top of a carbon tax is squeezing Canadians to the point that they cannot afford to get to work, they cannot afford to drive their kids to school and they cannot afford to drive a car.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Today's motion deals with affordability, so I see this as an opportunity to discuss poverty. Recently in the House, we debated Bill C-22. The intent of that bill is to lift Canadians out of poverty and to help make things affordable for persons with disabilities. Allow me to explain why Bill C-22 must continue forward. I am disappointed that the Conservatives stopped a unanimous consent motion to move Bill C-22 to committee yesterday. It is my sincere hope that they will explain their reasoning to Canadians.

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In the past, the disability community has often been left out or even forgotten. Since forming government in 2015, we have worked tirelessly to include the disability community in policy-making from the start. We are bold in taking action to ensure that no one is left behind, so that everyone feels like a fully participating member of society. Despite all the efforts and achievements of the past few years, the pandemic has taught us some really hard lessons, one of them being that we need to do more to make life affordable for working-age persons with disabilities. Bill C-22 would help address these issues. It aims to create the Canada disability benefit, which would add to the financial assistance already available from provinces and territories.

Guillaume Parent is the president and founder of the wealth management firm Finandicap, which specializes in financial services for persons with disabilities. Originally founded in Quebec City, Finandicap now operates across Canada.

In an interview with the CBC, Mr. Parent said that people are suffering a lot, especially because of the rising cost of living. His clients often face extra costs for adaptive housing, public transit and personal support workers. As a person living with cerebral palsy himself, this is his lived reality. All of the expenses he lists make life less affordable and push the poverty line higher for persons with disabilities. In Quebec, disability benefits are indexed to inflation and, in Mr. Parent's view, the problem is that these increases take effect long after prices have already gone up. Mr. Parent adds that governments need to recognize and adapt to this reality. This is what we are trying to achieve through Bill C-22.

In my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville, Luso Canadian Charitable Society is an incredible organization that helps Canadians with disabilities and provides critical services to many members of our local community. Luso provides a safe, supportive and caring environment for individuals and supports families living with physical or developmental disabilities. A month ago, I had the amazing opportunity to celebrate one of Luso's members, Paul, who turned 60, which is an incredible milestone to achieve. I was happy to celebrate his birthday with him.

We recognize that we have a responsibility to do more for Canadians. Working-age persons with disabilities need our help. Bill C-22 would supplement, not replace, other government programs. If Bill C-22 moves forward, then the Canada disability benefit would be introduced. The Canada disability benefit would make life more affordable for hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities by lifting them out of poverty.

We are working hard to give all Canadians a little breathing room. In fact, we recently announced that we will be putting in place additional measures to make life more affordable for Canadians who need them most. Those measures would do things like double the GST credit for six months and provide a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit to deliver \$500 to 1.8 million Canadian renters who are struggling with the cost of housing.

The bottom line is that we are doing the work to help make life more affordable for Canadians across the country, and that includes hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities. In the spirit of affordability and in the spirit of lifting Canadians out of poverty,

Bill C-22 must continue to move forward. Working-age Canadians with disabilities depend on it.

For my Conservative colleagues, it is time to get back to work so that we can pass a bill like Bill C-22 to help those who need it most.

• (1555)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way mentioned the GST credit increase, the doubling of the payment. I do not believe one payment is going to fix the affordability issue. What is going to happen after that payment?

Will the member vote with her government to increase taxes even though that GST credit increase, that one-time payment, is not going to last forever?

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that we are helping families weather inflationary impacts by putting more money back into their pockets this year, including our government's plan to put a price on pollution, which is designed so that the majority of households receive more in climate action payments and help multiple Canadians across the country. For example, the payments will be \$745 in Ontario, \$830 in Manitoba, \$1,100 in Saskatchewan and \$1,080 in Alberta. This is real money that will go into the pockets of Canadians and support them further.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech, in which she talked about the difficult situation that seniors are experiencing because of inflation and price increases. She talked about increasing old age security to better support them.

The problem we have with that increase is that only seniors aged 75 and over will benefit. The government is leaving out people aged 65 to 75.

In the fight against inflation, if the government wants to recognize seniors, why is it creating two classes of seniors? Why is it leaving out people aged 65 to 75?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that we are leading the world on the price of pollution and we do care about seniors. The money that I am talking about would put more money into the pockets of all Canadians, including seniors. The fact remains that these new taxes the Conservative motion alludes to simply do not exist.

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Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, lost in this conversation is the very fact that, when talking about employment insurance and pension copays, this is workers' money and contributions matched by their employers, yet we have a Liberal government that in the past raided these funds to balance the budget to the tune of \$50 billion under Chrétien and Martin.

Would the hon. Liberal member agree with New Democrats that pensions and EI contributions need to be separated out of the general coffers and protected, because it was never the government's money to begin with? It was always the money of hard-working Canadians.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Mr. Speaker, CPP and EI contributions are for working Canadians, to assist them with their retirement. We will create a safety net for Canadians through this to support them in case they lose their jobs.

Unlike the Conservatives, our government has a plan that will save the planet, create growth and make life more affordable.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for her support of an open letter last April calling on the government to immediately reintroduce Bill C-22 and get support to Canadians with disabilities. In the member's speech, she mentioned some MPs who blocked yesterday's unanimous consent motion, which was disappointing. However, what is also true is that the governing party could bring back Bill C-22 for debate as soon as Monday, but it is not.

What can the member do to press for Bill C-22 to be brought back for debate in the House and for emergency supports for Canadians with disabilities in the meantime?

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Mr. Speaker, there is so much we can do, like advocating here in the House. As I said in my speech, I just want all of us to come together. Let us move forward so that we can get Bill C-22 passed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is well aware that we are going through a period of high inflation around the world. Families are feeling the pinch at the pumps and at the grocery store. It is not an easy time. However, the fact remains that Canada is doing well compared to its peers, with a slightly lower inflation rate. Inflation is 7% in Canada, but it is about 8.3% in the United States, 7.9% in Germany and 9.9% in the United Kingdom. Things are really not going well in Great Britain these days.

I also want to point out to the House that inflation is a global phenomenon that can be attributed in large part to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and China's zero-COVID policy.

Although the causes of inflation are outside Canada's control, there are certainly things we can do here right now to help Canadians. That is why we are bringing in measures totalling \$12.1 billion to make the cost of living more affordable for millions of Canadians in order to help them make ends meet and provide for their families.

Our affordability measures are a key part of the government's assistance plan to make life more affordable for Canadians from coast to coast. Thanks to our plan, in July of this year, we increased old age security by 10% for people aged 75 and up. This will mean over \$800 in additional benefits in the first year for seniors who receive the full benefit and increased benefits for over three million seniors.

We are also strengthening the Canada workers benefit with investments of \$1.7 billion a year. That means a couple earning minimum wage could receive up to \$2,400 more in support this year, and we estimate that this could put more money into the pockets of about three million Canadians.

In collaboration with the provinces and territories, we are putting in place a new universal system of affordable early learning and child care services. Thanks to this system, Canadian families will see their child care costs reduced by 50% on average this year.

Last week, our government introduced Bills C-30 and C-31 to implement three important measures to help Canadians. With Bill C-30, we will double the GST credit for six months, which will provide an additional \$2.5 billion in support to those Canadians who need it most. Single Canadians without children will receive up to \$234 more, while couples with two children will receive up to \$467 more this year. I would like to point out that the official opposition said last week that it would support Bill C-30. That is excellent news.

With Bill C-31, we are moving forward with a one-time top-up of \$500 to the Canada housing benefit for 1.8 million renters who are struggling to pay their rent. That is more than double the amount allocated in budget 2022.

With Bill C-31, we are also proposing to create the Canadian dental benefit for families that do not have access to private dental insurance and make less than \$90,000 a year. Oral health is so important to overall health for children and Canadians.

● (1605)

It would provide financial support to parents with children under the age of 12 starting this year. Families will receive direct payments of up to \$650 per year for the next two years, for a total of \$1,300 per child, to cover dental costs. This is the first step in the government's plan to provide dental care for families in need.

I hope that the official opposition will support Bill C-31 as it supported Bill C-30.

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I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that, through the climate action incentive payment, our government is returning a significant amount of money to Canadians living in the provinces that do not have their own pricing system that meets the Canada-wide standard, which are Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. I should note that Quebec has had its carbon exchange for a long time.

Approximately 90% of the fuel charge proceeds go straight back to residents of these provinces through the climate action incentive payment. In 2022-23, a family of four will receive \$745 in Ontario, \$832 in Manitoba, \$1,101 in Saskatchewan, and \$1,079 in Alberta. In most cases, the recipients will be getting more back than they paid.

We have a plan to help Canadians that puts more money into the pockets of those who need it most, when they need it most. I am very proud of our government's plan to make life more affordable for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Canadians can continue to count on our government to support them as we move through this inflationary period.

As Bills C-30 and C-31 show, we continue to make progress in offering Canadians the measures they need to help them make ends meet.

• (1610)

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague admit that Canadians are hurting, so I invite her to cross the floor and come over to join the fight to put more money back into Canadians' pockets.

I also heard her explain that, basically, the Parliamentary Budget Officer absolutely does not have a clue. That is pretty much what she said.

Right now, the United States, with no carbon tax, has falling emissions, and Canada, with a rising carbon tax, has rising emissions. I would like my hon. colleague to explain that sort of twisted, inverse relationship. It is not making sense to me and it is not making sense to Canadians. Could she explain that to us, please?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for what I think was a question about how this side of the House, this government, is making life more affordable for Canadians.

I would like to point out that when we slash day care fees by 50% for families, we are making life more affordable. When we are able to help families pay for dental care for their children, we are making life more affordable. When we are rebating GST to double or triple the amount going back to Canadians, we are helping make life more affordable. That is how the government is helping Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her speech, which was certainly very interesting.

She spoke at length about the measures her government is putting in place to deal with inflation, including dental insurance and rent assistance. However, when we read the bill, it is clear that it is not compatible with what exists in Quebec. Quebec has its own rent assistance program, and Quebecers do not apply for the benefit directly. There is not a single line in Bill C-31 to tie it all together.

The same goes for dental insurance. Bill C-31 is for children who are 11 or younger. In Quebec, unless I am mistaken, children under the age of nine are already covered. How do we tie that together? There is not a single word about it. They did not even think about it.

Does the government intend to amend the bill to take Quebec's reality into account? We opposition members can make amendments in committee, but the House of Commons law clerks would not find that acceptable since it would require royal assent. What does my colleague think?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's very well articulated question, because the federal government often launches initiatives and then negotiates with the provinces afterward.

I am very proud to be a Quebecer because our province took the lead in a number of programs, including publicly funded child care. That benefited me personally. I just want to answer another question that the member asked my colleague about seniors: Why did we increase payments for those 75 and up?

That decision was made in response to the D'Amours report, which was released in Quebec about 15 years ago. It showed that there is a real need starting at age 75.

• (1615)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I was very pleased to hear her talk about the benefits of a dental care program for children, youth and, next year, seniors.

I find it surprising that she did not mention that this was an NDP demand that the Liberals voted for. We forced them to do it as part of the agreement we signed for the next few years. Will she acknowledge that this is something that the NDP pushed for and that they finally agreed to?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure my hon. colleague that we are very thankful for the fact that there is a lot of collaboration here in the House. As for dental care, I think it is really a win-win situation that we have achieved together.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lethbridge.

I am happy to be here today supporting our opposition motion, which states:

That, given that the cost of government is driving up inflation, making the price of goods Canadians buy and the interest they pay unaffordable, this House call on the government to commit to no new taxes on gas, groceries, home heating and pay cheques.

Business of Supply

I want to bring the voices of my constituents from Kelowna—Lake Country to Ottawa, not the other way around. Over many months this year, I have sent out several surveys to hear how people are struggling with the government's 40-year-high inflation. I had thousands of responses. Robyn in Lake Country said, "People can't afford to eat, to get to work, to take care of the basics for their families in this economy." Rollie in Kelowna wrote that the government must "slow down on their spending. They're putting people in the poor house. It's a real shame."

Tax relief is what my constituents are asking for, and the vast majority agree. With the record gas prices we are seeing today in British Columbia, that relief is more desperately needed than ever.

Recently, as a member of the industry committee, I questioned Aaron Wudrick, director of domestic policy at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. In response to my questioning about Canada's regulatory burden, high taxes and expensive housing affecting young adults, Mr. Wudrick said, "In short, they're discouraging."

I agree with his assessment, especially after speaking with many young people in Kelowna—Lake Country and across B.C. over the summer. They feel hopeless. They feel hopeless when seeing the value of their paycheques decline, hopeless in finding the money they need to start a business and hopeless in finding an affordable apartment, let alone ever dreaming of owning a home of their own.

International students often pursue education in high-demand fields. They have lost hope in being able to afford to live in Canada. We have a labour crisis in everything from health care to farming to tourism. The government's high-spend, high-cost agenda will see us lose their ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

A recent Leger poll showed that 46% of young immigrants say they are now less likely to stay in Canada. When asked why they would not recommend Canada to future immigrants, the top two reasons given were the cost of living and the current government.

Higher taxes are not the solution either. How do we know? It is because under the last Conservative government, we oversaw the lowest federal tax burden in over half a century, nobody needed to wait month after month for passport renewals past deadlines and homes were half the price. Furthermore, it should come as no surprise that new taxes, as well as presently automatic tax increases, would have a significant impact on small business owners.

As the shadow minister for small business recovery and growth, I have had the opportunity to speak with numerous workers and owners of small businesses in Kelowna—Lake Country and across the country to hear their perspectives, the challenges facing them and what needs to be done, or not done, by the federal government to allow them not just to survive but to succeed. We have a 40-year-high inflation rate, labour shortages, supply chain issues, increasing business debt and federal tax increases on businesses, and they are already increasing costs at an unmanageable level for small businesses.

Small businesses have been hit particularly hard as a result of the volatile open-and-shut cycle over the last two and a half years, with 54% of businesses still reporting below-normal revenues. About 62% of small businesses are still carrying debt from the pandemic, according to the CFIB. It also notes that small business insolvencies

are on the rise, with a reported one in six businesses considering closing their doors. Downtowns and business districts have been hollowed out, with small businesses in those areas struggling to even keep their doors open given limited customers.

I spoke to a BIA organization this week, a business improvement area organization, that often represents main streets. It is saying that now the heart of some of its issues deal with mental health and addiction crises. It also said its members are burdened with debt. They are having a very challenging time.

● (1620)

Many are barely hanging on. It is nothing short of cold-hearted to increase multiple taxes that would further hit their bottom lines. I know what a small business owner is going through, as I have been one myself. Small business owners have not forgotten the 2017 Liberal-proposed tax changes that party attempted to ram through on small businesses, which would have been devastating to entrepreneurship in our country. These tax changes would have had "significant, unintended effects on all SMEs, particularly middle-class, family businesses." Those are the words that came from the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade back in 2018.

Thanks to the advocacy of small businesses, chambers of commerce, BIAs, boards of trades and Conservatives pressing the issue day in and day out, the government finally backed down. This just shows the government's mindset.

What are the main taxes that are going up soon? We have the payroll tax, the excise tax and the carbon tax, which affects the cost of everything. Dan Kelly at the CFIB put it well recently in explaining why a payroll tax is, in fact, a tax. As he put it, "1. They are mandatory, with penalties for not paying. 2. While there are benefits that come back to some of those paying premiums, they are not proportionate to the amount paid. 3. For the business that pays 60% of EI & 50% of CPP costs, they are unquestionably payroll taxes as the benefits are for workers, not employers."

Regardless of what the government says and tries to obfuscate, even the Prime Minister has called these payroll taxes, and many other Liberals have as well. These taxes are going up every year, hitting the paycheques of workers and the bottom lines of small businesses, and should not be increasing during a time of 40-year-high inflation.

Business of Supply

The excise tax is an escalator tax, which is a fancy bureaucratic word for “automatic”. It is a tax that does not have to come to Parliament to increase. It automatically goes up. The excise tax is on beer, wine, ciders and spirits. These industries raise concerns about this every year while the government ignores them, and 95% are small businesses.

Every year these taxes go up automatically, hitting our local producers with more taxes, as well as the retailers and restaurateurs who buy these products and who then have to pass on the price to people who buy them. This ultimately adds further to inflation. As Restaurants Canada said, the government introducing the automatic escalator in 2017 “made an already bad situation worse” for restaurants.

Recently at the industry committee, we heard from Beer Canada, which called excise tax increases “counterproductive and harmful” to their sector, and “simply not sustainable over the long term.” Let us not forget this escalator is tied to the CPI and, therefore, inflation, meaning it will go even higher next year, adding more to inflation. It is set to increase again on April 1.

On the carbon tax, after the government said it would cap it at \$50 a tonne, it is now planning to bring it up to \$150 a tonne, more than three times what was initially promised and at a rate that small businesses are still disproportionately paying into without the appropriate rebates to offset it. Carbon tax increases make the cost of fuel, food and goods shipped anywhere more expensive.

It is time for the government to recognize that adding taxes only increases costs and inflation. The government has provided no solutions to address inflation itself, and now, on top of 40-year-high inflation and interest rate hikes, small businesses' bottom lines are being further squeezed with higher costs for imported goods due to the Canadian dollar falling to the lowest point in almost two years.

Stop the pain. Stop the tax increases.

● (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we were to accept the Conservative position that payroll taxes are taxes and they are something that people have to pay for now, how would the member explain the fact that, if we do not invest in CPP now, those same individuals will have to pay for it later when there is no CPP available to provide for them and their pensions. I do not think we can have it both ways.

Are CPP and EI payroll taxes, or are they tools that help provide resources for people in their times of need?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, the point is that people cannot afford food right now. They cannot afford to put fuel in their vehicles. We have reports of students living in homeless shelters. We know that the stats for food banks are up across the country. This is the state we are in right now. People cannot even afford their basic necessities. Now is not the time to increase anything, during this 40-year-high inflation, that will further stop people from being able to afford even the basic necessities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I do not entirely agree with her and, more importantly, I do not share the same vision. I think it would be better to reduce our dependence on oil and accelerate the energy transition to protect our economy against sudden increases in the price of fossil fuels. We know full well that the price of gas has jumped 33.3% since last year, and that is an important driver of inflation.

I would like her to explain the reasons behind her decision.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, as of today and tomorrow, we still have vehicles that are transporting food to grocery stores. We still have vehicles that are going across this country transporting all the goods we buy every day when we go out to all of the stores. That is the reality we have right now. People use their vehicles to take their kids to school and to all the sports, recreation and arts they do. Those are the vehicles they are using today. It is really unrealistic to say people cannot go anywhere, go to work or go to the grocery store. The cost of everything they are buying just keeps going up. It is unrealistic and it is out of touch.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the member of the official opposition talk about inflation and copayments for pensions and employment insurance, but not once did she talk about profits. I would like to give the hon. member the opportunity right now. Oil and gas made \$147 billion, yet not one word came out of this member about that.

Would she perhaps give some consideration to the runaway profits of the oil and gas sector, the food sector and the housing market, rather than simply being stuck on the taxation associated with it?

● (1630)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I am sorry that I am stuck on talking about small businesses, which are actually the backbone of our Canadian economy and the backbone of communities all across the country. Right now, with the situation we are in, and I talked a lot about small businesses, they are experiencing crushing debt. They cannot even afford to pay some of their bills.

While the member is chirping at me and not allowing me to answer, small businesses are in a situation right now where one in six are considering closing. That is the reality. That is the situation they are in. Now is not the time to be increasing any taxes that affect people and small businesses.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, today's motion is about putting people first. It is about Canadians. It is about seeing them. It is about hearing them. It is about making sure they are understood. It is about doing no harm. That is what today's debate is all about.

I am advocating for Canadians. This should not be something that is controversial or that causes disgraceful comments to be made within this place from the opposite side, but somehow it is.

The last several months have left Canadians absolutely dumbfounded at the federal government's lack of care, concern and compassion toward them. As food prices have continued to rise astronomically due to inflation, as energy costs have put people in detrimental places, the Prime Minister is choosing to increase the cost of living for Canadians through one policy implementation after another.

During question period today my Conservative colleagues and I asked the government to demonstrate a little compassion and to stop its planned tax hikes. The Liberals responded with obscure studies and statistics, telling us that, actually, we had it all wrong and that Canadians were better off and getting ahead. It was as if to say that government knows best and that what Canadians are feeling is illegitimate. How demeaning and how heartless.

I have heard many of my constituents share their stories with me and post other stories online that tell me that they are struggling, they are hopeless and many of them are in despair. I am talking about a senior who recently came into my constituency office in Lethbridge to share with me that she lives in a mobile home and she is having a hard time making ends meet. Normally she would go to her neighbour or maybe her son in order to get assistance, but the reality is that they are in the same boat. I am talking about another couple who came into my office who had lost their home because they could not make their mortgage renewal due to inflation. Now they are living in an RV in their parents' backyard. She is struggling immensely with mental health issues.

I am talking about an elderly man from Medicine Hat, Alberta, who, several weeks ago, submitted his application for medical assistance in dying because he cannot afford to pay for medication, food and shelter. He made the choice to end his life. In a public statement, this man, who lives with a physical disability, said that he does not want to die; he simply can't afford to live.

These are the kinds of stories that are transpiring from coast to coast to coast. This is not the Canada these folks deserve.

A recent report revealed that almost a quarter of Canadians are having to cut back on the food they eat or the groceries they buy, because they just simply cannot afford it. Meanwhile, the number of people accessing food banks and the number of children going to sleep hungry at night is drastically increasing. We are a country that feeds the world. There is no need for this.

However, there are ramifications for "Justinflation". These ramifications—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the Chair has ruled repeatedly that the term the member just used is not appropriate because it is doing indirectly what members are not al-

lowed to do directly. Perhaps the Speaker could remind the member of that, and she could retract her comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Agreed, and I would strongly suggest that the member use another term.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, more and more Canadians are struggling to get by because their dollars are valued less and less due to inflation.

Let us talk about charities for a moment. Many charities have filled the gaps we have had in this country, but because Canadians are so hard done by right now, they do not even have enough left at the end of the month to donate where they normally would. This is then leaving an increased gap in social services and the ability to care for one another. That is shameful.

We have an affordability crisis that is actually destroying people's lives, but the government can play a role. It can if it chooses to. It is simple. It needs to axe the tax. It needs to stop its out-of-control spending, and it needs to be a responsible government that brings in investment rather than pushing it out.

There are other things, too. We have an opportunity in the realm of agriculture. We are incredible at producing food. We literally feed the world. My riding of Lethbridge does this incredibly well. The bounty that comes from there should be celebrated, but instead we have a government that wants to put policies in place that would reduce crop yield. We have a government that wants to punish our farmers and producers, those who bring life, rather than celebrate them or give them credit for the incredible superpower they hold.

There is another superpower too: energy. We have the third-largest oil reserve in the world, and we are the fifth-largest producer of natural gas. Just like food, the world needs energy. It is what keeps us going, and Canada has the potential to be the solution to the world's needs in this regard. We could be stepping up and taking our place on the world stage, but instead we are shrinking back. We could displace the reliance, currently in existence, on regimes that we should not be supporting, but instead we continue.

We have an opportunity to be the answer to Europe's need for LNG, as the chancellor of Germany asked us to be, but the Prime Minister responded by saying there is no business case. How is there is no business case? Of course there is a business case. There are people in need of energy, and we have energy. The government should figure out the infrastructure and make it happen. It simply takes political will.

The NDP and the Liberals love to rail against profitable organizations, but in their attempt to foster an environment of hostility and demonize those who would generate wealth, they forget about a few facts. One is that, in the generation of wealth, jobs are created. In the generation of wealth, taxes are paid and, ultimately, those taxes come full circle and help support the very social programs that we value. It is crucial to understand that without the generation of wealth, there is no safety net for those in need.

Business of Supply

Let me say that again. Without the generation of wealth, there is no safety net for those in need. Therefore, instead of demonizing the businesses that are producing jobs, generating wealth and helping our country do well, let us celebrate them. I am confident that, if we can get government out of the way to provide the freedom for Canadians to reach their greatest potential, our nation would not only thrive but also be a leader among nations. It just takes a bit of political will.

We have the opportunity to foster an environment of entrepreneurship, to remove unnecessary boundaries and red tape, to scrap excess taxation, and to draw investment into our country. That is what Conservatives are calling on the government to do.

Yesterday, we gave the folks opposite an opportunity to vote with Conservatives and for Canadians. We asked them to do this by halting their plan to triple the carbon tax. Sadly, they chose themselves instead of the Canadian people, so today we are giving them another opportunity to stand with millions of Canadians. Millions of Canadians are struggling to get by. Millions of Canadians are struggling to feed their families, pay their rent, afford their mortgages and fuel their cars. That is real.

The folks across the way can pull out whatever sorts of charts, graphs and “statistics” they want. It is not going to convince Canadians that somehow they are better off just because the Liberals told them so.

• (1635)

Canadians know the reality. They feel the reality, day in and day out, when they have to make hard choices about where they will spend their last dollar.

In the midst of an affordability crisis, we are calling on the government today to stop their planned tax increases on the paycheques of Canadians so they can keep more of the money they earn.

Canadians and Conservatives are hoping that the government will finally demonstrate some compassion, do the right thing and vote in favour of this motion today. It is time to give Canadians back the control of their lives that they always should have had because the potential is within the people. The future of this country is within the people. They are the problem-solvers. They are the solution makers. They are the wealth generators. They are the ones who are going to take us toward a prosperous future. They are the ones who deserve for the government to get out of the way to allow them to move forward in the direction they wish to go.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. It is funny, the people who keep saying that we need to create wealth before we can redistribute it never really redistribute it.

My colleague talked about people who are suffering, the less fortunate and persons with disabilities. That is very good, but action speaks louder than words.

I have a simple question for my colleague. How can she explain that yesterday the Conservatives refused to refer to committee a bill

that seeks to increase support for persons with disabilities? Does that not contradict what she just said?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, the motion on the floor today is, in fact, about serving Canadians. It is, in fact, about making them better off.

The motion on the floor today, unfortunately, is not about what the opposite member mentioned. I think you would probably desire, Madam Speaker, that we stay focused on what we are discussing today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry. Would the hon. member please repeat her comment that I would desire something?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I was wondering if you would desire for the House to stay on topic with the motion today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is the point of the question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not think that answer was sufficient because the member from the NDP asked a specific question.

The member's entire speech was about affordability for Canadians and providing supports for Canadians. The member from the NDP asked a specific question about why the Conservatives are preventing a very important piece of legislation for people with disabilities from going forward. This is a piece of legislation that would help individuals and Canadians with disabilities.

Perhaps the member can reflect on the non-answer she just gave to the NDP and provide an answer as to why the Conservatives are holding up that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, due to the decorum of the member, I will not answer the question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I want to make sure I understood something. The motivation behind this debate—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we please allow the hon. member to ask the question so the member is able to listen and answer?

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, there is something I want to be sure I understand. The argument being bandied about is that the carbon tax is going to triple.

The carbon tax will not be tripled right away. It will take around a decade for that to happen. My crystal ball is not showing me with any certainty what the inflation rate will be at that time. I want to understand. What is the urgency in all this?

• (1645)

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, the motion on the table here today concerns increased taxation and the way that influences Canadians. As Conservatives, we are asking that we halt any further increases to taxation because we want to allow Canadians to keep more of the money they work hard to earn. I do not think that is too much to ask.

Canadians are hurting in this country right now because the cost of living is being driven through the roof due to the current government's reckless decisions. Its members continue to be heartless in the policies they are implementing and in their refusal to back down from the increase of taxes. It is shameful.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to come back to this point respectfully. In her speech, the member for Lethbridge purported to be concerned about Canadians with disabilities. I expect she was truthful with that concern. As a result, would she share the actions she will take to engage with members of her caucus who blocked a unanimous consent motion to provide supports to Canadians with disabilities?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I believe what the member is referring to is something that is very procedural. There is the substance of something brought forward and then there is the process. We disagree with the process. We absolutely stand for Canadians who live with a disability. We are talking about a population within this country who lives on a small government stipend. They do not have an opportunity to go get a job or earn an extra wage right now, but they have to make those same dollars stretch even further due to the government's poor policies.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver East, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Nunavut, the Environment; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, National Defence.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the current inflationary crisis is affecting everyone and putting millions of households in hopeless situations. Families must make agonizing choices to be able to continue making rent or mortgage payments.

Many low-income people are cutting back on food and going hungry. The same is true for many middle-class households that are heavily in debt. Such a huge increase in prices, especially for food, energy and housing, creates considerable hardship, and that is not something to take lightly.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask hon. members to please quiet down so we can actually hear the speech. I am having troubling hearing it, and I am sure the interpreters are also having trouble with the noise.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, thank you for keeping decorum in the House.

As I was saying, we cannot take these huge price increases and the hardship they cause lightly, especially when it comes to the price of food, electricity and housing. My thoughts are with the millions of seniors who were already struggling to make ends meet before prices started going up. They are now facing an impossible task, making choices or making cuts to their budgets.

The inflation crisis is one of the most worrisome issues in the world, and I acknowledge that people are trying to address it and find solutions. I am going to put on my CEGEP economics teacher cap and give an overview of inflation and the economy.

The aggregate demand and aggregate supply model is a useful tool for understanding the phenomenon of inflation. This model tells us that inflation is caused by an increase in aggregate demand, a decrease in total supply or a combination of the two. Analysts generally agree that the increase in prices we are experiencing is essentially a global phenomenon primarily attributed to a decrease in aggregate supply.

The supply chain problem led to a significant drop in supply. It is the same thing with the war in Ukraine. Crop failures due to droughts or floods are also reducing supply in the food sector. Labour shortages, which existed before the pandemic but have gotten worse since, are limiting business activity, leading to a decrease in total supply, and so on.

On the demand side, we have seen more of a change than a significant increase in demand. During the pandemic, people shifted their usual consumer choices to new sectors. Supply was unable to adapt quickly enough, so we saw new price increases and often shortages, resulting from the imbalance.

We are seeing the same type of imbalance in the real estate market, where the construction of new housing is insufficient to meet demand. Inflation in that sector is also driven by the increase in the price of building materials, which is itself explained by the current inflationary situation and the change in consumer habits during the pandemic, not to mention the impact of the war.

Business of Supply

Even though the central bank's injection of money into the economy and the government's support to keep consumption going during lockdown were more generous than necessary, because they were not always well targeted, the effect of those interventions on the increase in global demand and on prices is generally secondary. The government's actions are not the main reason for the global inflationary crisis.

Unfortunately for us, and especially for those impacted the most by the current rate of inflation, there is no simple solution to a decrease in aggregate supply. The best solution is to support businesses as they adapt to the new reality. It is a long and complicated process, but as I said, even if the effect is not felt immediately, it is the best solution.

For example, let us look at the labour shortage. The government could provide support for the automation of some economic activities. The government could also change the tax system to entice young retirees who want to remain in the labour market, perhaps with part-time work. The government could provide support for companies that invest in resilience, for example by making decisions that cut their energy consumption. The government could also do this for households, of course.

That is the primary solution for addressing the supply side of the issue. Unfortunately, this government is doing very little about it. I am also disappointed that the official opposition, which says it is concerned about this issue, is not putting this solution forward. Both major Canadian parties seem to be short-sighted on this issue.

It is often said that the central bank is well positioned to use monetary policy to counter inflation. The Bank of Canada must ensure that the overall economy is in good shape. To that end, its main policy objective for the past 30 years has been to keep the average annual increase in prices within a range of 1% to 3%. Obviously, we are well past the upper limit now.

Although the central bank is extremely well equipped to control inflation when the economy is overheating because of an increase in aggregate demand, the situation is very different in the event of a supply crisis. That is because successively raising its key interest rate does not allow the central bank to influence supply. It simply reduces demand.

● (1650)

In other words, since production is insufficient to meet the demand, equilibrium prices rise, and all the Bank of Canada can do is lower demand to reduce the price increase. However, at the end of the day, there are not more goods and services on the market, only less room to manoeuvre and borrow to make consumption or investment choices.

Such a monetary policy could pose a risk. If, at the time of implementation, the economy is not in an overheated situation where overall supply is basically inelastic, the central bank's action could also slow down the economy or even plunge it into recession. Considering how much the labour market is changing, this could almost be described as a quantum leap. The signals of the economic context are difficult to pick up, and there is a real risk that the monetary policy will be too restrictive and therefore impede growth.

Again, there is not much that either monetary or fiscal policy can do to respond to a supply crisis. These policies aim to reduce demand in order to lower prices, but they do not allow for increased production in the short term.

I want to reiterate that the best government policy is to support businesses and help them adapt and become more resilient in order to push supply back up, even though that does not happen automatically.

If there is one lesson we can learn from the global supply-and-demand model, it is that we need to avoid falling into the very tempting trap of responding to a decrease in supply by giving everyone money. That kind of policy may appear to meet people's needs, but it will quickly fuel inflation. It is therefore a futile, ineffective policy, especially if it drives society as a whole into debt. It is a good solution, but not for a supply-side crisis.

Tax cuts would have exactly the same effect. It is tempting, but it is a short-sighted solution that would make the problem worse, not better. Indeed, such an expansionist policy would actually thwart the central bank's restrictive policy. That would be the worst possible situation. England is currently experiencing major difficulties that illustrate what happens when policies clash like that.

What can we do? As I said, there are no simple or easy solutions. We can help companies pivot. We also have a moral obligation to help the most vulnerable people and the hardest-hit sectors cope.

I am thinking of low-income families and single people, especially seniors who live on modest pensions that are not indexed. I am also thinking of sectors that are particularly affected by inflation, such as agriculture. We also need to reinvest in social housing to respond to the housing crisis.

For goodness' sake, though, we should not send cheques to everyone, lower taxes for everyone or, above all, abandon our climate efforts.

● (1655)

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Bloc is very concerned about the environment and believes that the carbon tax actually cuts emissions, but I read this in the *Toronto Sun*: “The Americans, without a national carbon tax, reduced [their emissions] by 21%. Canada, with a national carbon tax, reduced [their emissions] by 9%.” When we are talking about this, we are talking about making sure the carbon tax does not triple, because we are worried about the affordability crisis that Canadians are facing.

Could the hon. member explain to me how supporting a national carbon tax, which does not cut emissions but increases the price of food, is a good policy going forward for Canadians in all provinces?

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I have a few things to say to him in response.

First, I would love to analyze and study the impact of the Liberal government's carbon tax. This tax will increase gradually, and it is set to triple by 2030, not right now when we are in the middle of an inflationary crisis. What will be the actual, concrete impact on the price of food and the cost of living? We have to study that in order to put a figure on the results. I think the impact will be much lower than indicated.

Now I would like to ask my colleague if he acknowledges that human activity contributes to climate change. If so, does he agree that Canada should honour the Paris Agreement, which requires us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions? If the answer is yes, what would his plan be? My concern is that this government's plan will not even enable us to honour the agreement.

My colleague spoke of the national policy. In closing, I would like to remind him that the English Canadian nation is not my nation. Quebec's national policy is the carbon market, which, by the way, was created by a Liberal premier, one Jean Charest. Therefore, Quebec is not subject to this government's carbon tax. Since we have a different system and a different model, we are not affected by these changes.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech. I was interested to learn that he used to teach economics.

I apologize, but I will have to stop for a moment because I can hear the interpretation in my earpiece.

As the member mentioned, many economists have said that broad-based tax cuts would lead to inflation. People are frustrated about having to pay more for their rent and their groceries while rich CEOs rake in huge profits.

Would my colleague agree that a better strategy would be to tax companies that increase the prices that Canadians pay at the grocery store and at the pumps?

• (1700)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for Victoria for making such a concerted effort to ask her question in French. We have all had the experience in the House where we hear the interpretation while we are asking our question. To hear your question being translated, especially in your mother tongue, is quite disconcerting, so I salute her effort.

The Bloc Québécois is a progressive party. We support the idea of a more progressive tax system, meaning that the wealthy pay a higher percentage of taxes than the poor. As we know, poorer people tend to use their income to cover the cost of essential goods. For example, members of the House earn high salaries and, despite what we pay in taxes, we do not have to make such agonizing choices.

My colleague's question is well worth considering. The fact that big corporations are making excess profits as a result of the current

situation is something that needs to be looked at. I have read quite a bit about this, and let us just say that analysts are quite divided on the feasibility of this. What is the right way to go about it?

We certainly need to move in that direction, but we must do so efficiently while maintaining stability in the system.

Again, bravo to my colleague for asking her question in French.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must apologize to the hon. member because I will not attempt to speak French with the question I have.

We have seen a “back to the future” move from the Conservative Party. Stephen Harper thought that lowering taxes would promote the trickle-down effect, but what trickled down certainly was not much help to the Canadian economy or the Canadian people. We are hearing the same thing from the new leader of the Conservative Party. Given that they are cut from the same cloth, we should not be surprised.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the effectiveness he sees in the Conservative strategy to simply cut taxes as a way to help people through tough times.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, even though it was not asked in French. Perhaps he will try next time.

The trickle-down theory, which refers to the notion of creating wealth before distributing it, was popular in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. I would say that it was possible to continue embracing the theory up until the 1990s. It was an ideological vision. Since the 1990s, however, this theory has been clearly debunked. Nothing ends up trickling down, so it is not a theory that can be supported.

As for the second part of my colleague's question, I will use the example of England, which is really not doing well right now. The Bank of England has adopted a restrictive policy, but the government has adopted an expansionist budgetary policy. Together, these short-sighted policies cancel each other out and result in debt.

It is wishful thinking to believe that cutting taxes will significantly stimulate the economy, especially at a time when the economy is overheated and inflation is high. When I taught in CEGEP, we taught the Laffer curve, which espoused this theory and was developed by an American economist. It never worked. It is a myth. Experience has shown that it does not work.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention and for his speech. Since he taught economics at two CEGEPs, I would like to ask him something. We are familiar with the incendiary declarations that the Leader of the Opposition made regarding the central bank, before he became leader of his party. We know that the central bank is often a target.

In the 20th century, however, John Maynard Keynes started talking about the importance of these banks. He also suggested that inflation was not primarily a monetary phenomenon.

Business of Supply

If I were to ask my dear colleague and friend to give our Conservative Party colleagues a quick economics lesson on central banks, what would he say, in a nutshell?

• (1705)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for the question, although when he mentioned the second CEGEP, I realized he was talking about UQAM. That is a serious mistake. I would have him know that the economics department at UQAM does good work.

Keynes' work certainly contributed to the establishment and creation of the first central banks and highlighted their importance. The other thing that came out of his work is the famous equation for the quantity theory of money. It does not happen automatically and instantaneously. It depends on several other factors. Keynes particularly drew attention to the perceptions or psychology of people and economic players in the phenomenon of inflation.

For example, the U.S. dollar is the global reserve currency. If a lot of money is printed, prices will rise much more slowly than in an economy where the currency is weaker, where foreign investors have less confidence in their currency. If they deviate slightly from established practice, prices can soar because confidence is lost more quickly in those economies. The central bank plays an important role, and it is important to respect its autonomy.

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to be able to speak in this House on behalf of the constituents of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan concerning this issue.

This past weekend I received a phone call from a constituent who is very concerned. This young man had been looking at his energy bills, and he noticed that on top of the carbon tax that he is paying on his energy and power bills, he is also paying GST. Come April, when the carbon tax will be tripled, so will his GST payments increase.

Why did he come to me? It is because he is facing some struggles and challenges at home. When someone takes the time to look at that and understand that they are paying more in compound tax, they are very concerned. A tax upon a tax is just not right for the people of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, and it is not right for the people of Canada.

Policies should be there to help us, not to punish us, but I feel that is what is actually happening. The government in power right now is trying to coerce the people of Canada into changing habits. I do not think it is actually winning the people of Canada over, because the habits have not changed and the carbon reductions have not met the government's targets. The Liberal government is failing, not only with bad policy; it is failing the people of Canada, and it is not listening to the people of Canada.

In the House, we hear about a climate crisis. When I do research and I look at what is happening in Saskatchewan and the challenges that farmers face, I see that drought is an issue in my riding. When I go to the University of Regina and look at the history of droughts in our province, I see that it goes way back. It goes back to 1910, 1914, 1917 to 1921, 1924, 1929, 1931 to 1939, 1958 to 1963, 1967

to 1969, 1974, 1977, 1979 to 1981, 1983 to 1986, 1988 to 1992, 2001 to 2003, 2009 and, people could argue, 2021. They cannot solve a crisis by creating another crisis. The crisis that the Liberal government is creating is taxing and burdening the people of this country.

I know by the physical posture on the other side that my colleagues in the Liberal and NDP government are hearing the same concerns that we are having. They are hearing that their people are being taxed way too much, that the policies in place are not solving the problem and that people's concerns are food, fuel and essentials. They are hearing that people need to provide a roof above their heads for their families, and that they want to plan for the future.

I am here because I want a better future for my children. One of the things I also teach my children is to be able to listen. The Liberal government is not listening to the people of Canada. The gentleman who called me last weekend said that at this point he would spend \$600 million on an election, just to get the government out. He would spend a little to save a lot. That says a lot about what people are going through. The Liberal government needs to listen to the people of Canada. No more taxes. Axe the tax.

• (1710)

It is about time the current Liberal government listened to the people of Canada. That is our job. We are in the House of Commons because we represent the common people of this country. We are commoners, and we should be looking out for the people who are in our ridings, who are our neighbours and who are our friends and family, and the government is not doing that.

It is time to axe the tax.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I still think there are better solutions. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about this. Right now, we know that rising prices are often driven by a lack of competition. We also know that the Competition Act encourages company mergers, which means more monopolies.

Does my colleague agree that the act should be amended?

Should the Investment Canada Act also be amended to counter the trend of foreign takeovers of our head offices?

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, when I think about the free enterprise system we have in Canada, I believe in competition. I believe that what we see are people who are innovative. I find that the potential in our country is in its people, that we are creative and innovative, and that the solution for our future is always in the future generations of our country.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***PROTECTION OF FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE ACT**

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (intimidation of health care professionals), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-230, the protection of freedom of conscience act. I appreciate the contributions of the member for Carlton Trail-Eagle Creek to medical assistance in dying, or MAID, which is a complex and deeply personal issue to many Canadians.

First, I want to acknowledge that the aim of the bill, which is to support the conscience rights of health care professionals, is indeed laudable. The government has always supported conscience rights, which is why, since the very beginning of Canada's MAID framework in a former bill, Bill C-14, these rights have been specifically recognized and acknowledged. However, at the same time, the criminal law is a blunt instrument that should be reserved for the most serious situations.

In my remarks today, I want to raise some questions about whether new offences are an appropriate solution to the legitimate concerns raised by the bill's sponsor. In this regard, it bears recalling the primary reason the criminal law is concerned with MAID in the first place, which is to provide the necessary exemptions to ensure that persons who choose to provide or assist in providing MAID do not face criminal consequences for doing so. The MAID provisions found in the Criminal Code were carefully crafted to respect the autonomy of Canadians, respond to the evolving issues and protect vulnerable persons. In other words, the involvement of criminal law is necessary to permit MAID while ensuring it is carried out in a safe, responsible manner.

However, Bill C-230 seeks to involve the criminal law in two very different ways: first, to create a new MAID-specific intimidation offence, and second, to create an employment sanctions offence. With respect to the former, the intimidation offence, it is worth reiterating that the Criminal Code already provides provisions for several offences that would be available to respond to situations where a health care professional is a victim of coercive or threatening behaviour, including the intimidation offence in section 423 and the extortion offence in section 346.

To me, it is not evident that an additional specific offence is required to protect conscience rights. I should also say that I am not aware of any evidence of health care professionals facing threatening circumstances in the context of refusing to provide MAID or that there is a specific gap that needs to be filled in our law.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to hear about believing in the market system and the free enterprise system. One would think, then, that the Conservatives would understand why pricing pollution is the right thing to do, because it builds into the equation of putting a cost on pollution. The member would know from this free market enterprise system, the system he speaks so highly of, that by doing that we then incentivize companies to look for solutions, to find alternative ways of doing business to reduce their costs. That is the whole point of putting a price on pollution, making it part of the economic model of pricing something and building the inputs into that product.

Can the member at least not reflect on why he would be against something like this, since he believes in that model?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, when I have a gentleman who is being taxed by the carbon tax on his heating and power bills, I wonder where that question comes from, because this is the everyday person who is being taxed for an essential that he needs in his house.

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:15, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division, or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Monday, October 3, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30, so we can move along to Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

Private Members' Business

I have taken note of the fact that the proposed intimidation offence in Bill C-230 would be a summary conviction offence, which, if enacted, would stand out from other intimidation offences in the Criminal Code. The existing offences are either straight indictable or hybrid offences. In addition to being duplicative of existing offences, the fact that the proposed intimidation offence would only be prosecutable by summary conviction may suggest that intimidating conduct is less serious in a MAID context, which seems counterintuitive.

To further highlight why I have concerns about creating a specific intimidation offence as proposed by Bill C-230, I would like to draw members' attention to a recent example that offers a clear contrast. Last year, as members will recall, unfortunately in some parts of our country there was a threatening atmosphere of intimidation present for many health care professionals who were simply trying to go to work and care for members of their communities during the pandemic. That is why the government responded with Bill C-3, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code, which provided new criminal law tools to protect all health care workers and all Canadians who are seeking their care.

I believe Bill C-3 was an appropriate criminal law response to the credible threats to the safety and security of health care professionals and Canadians, but I am not convinced that a similar response is necessary when it comes to the situation of conscience rights and the provision of MAID. It seems to me that the charter and existing criminal law offences already provide the necessary protections for those rights, alongside the specific provision in the current MAID framework that expressly states that nothing in the federal law compels an individual to provide or assist in providing MAID. There is simply no obvious need to supplement what already exists.

Turning to the employment sanctions offence, I am struggling with Bill C-230's proposal to create a new offence that would exclusively target employers who dismiss or refuse to employ health care professionals who choose not to provide MAID. Moreover, in my view, Bill C-230's employment sanctions offence would not address the concerns described in the bill's preamble regarding conscience rights and certain requirements for professionals to make effective referrals for MAID.

• (1720)

As members are aware, in some jurisdictions, the professional orders that regulate health care professions have established requirements that their members provide effective referrals for MAID. While there have been cases where these requirements were challenged, the courts, including the Court of Appeal for Ontario, have upheld them, noting that this is a difficult issue that involves taking into consideration the conscience rights of professionals and the needs of their patients.

I do not believe it would be constructive for Parliament to intervene by creating a new criminal offence such as the one proposed by the bill. Rather, a more productive approach is for the government to continue its efforts to work closely with the provinces and territories on the implementation of MAID in a manner that supports persons who may be considering it and the health care professionals who provide exceptional care to their patients.

For the reasons I have mentioned, I have significant concerns with Bill C-230. While I agree wholeheartedly with protecting the conscience rights of all health care professionals, including those who choose to participate or refuse to participate in MAID, I am not persuaded that the two offences proposed in the bill are necessary or desirable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here to discuss Bill C-230, which would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to intimidate health care personnel—a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or anyone who could provide medical assistance in dying. It seeks to create a Criminal Code offence to “protect” health care personnel. These health care professionals, now and in the future, may take part in the provision of medical assistance in dying.

Excuse me, Madam Speaker, but there is a lot of commotion. I would like to give my speech in peace.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask the hon. members who wish to carry on a conversation to go to the lobby, please, so the hon. member can give a speech we can all hear.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now I feel I can deliver a speech.

I want to make one thing clear to the House of Commons. I think this is the appropriate time to point it out, and I think everyone here will agree with me. No one is condoning bullying, be it of health care workers or here in the House. We all know people who have bullied others. Bullies are mean-spirited people whose actions betray their insecurity and fear. We all agree on that.

That being said, we are well aware that this bill has nothing to do with bullying or protecting health care workers from bullying. What this bill would actually do is interfere with people's ability to obtain medical assistance in dying. As I said this morning, the Conservative Party is once again exploiting a serious problem to put forward a misleading solution. The party claims this bill will protect health care workers from bullying, but it is hiding the real objective, which is to interfere with medical assistance in dying. As I said this morning, this is populism.

This morning, a member corrected me, saying that being populist was not necessarily a bad thing. Fine. I should have used the term “demagoguery”. It is demagoguery.

We know full well that this bill does not seek to eliminate the bullying of health care professionals. Its objective is simply once again to obstruct existing legislation in Quebec. What is more, it seeks to allow a medical practitioner or a health care professional to not refer a case to a colleague. That goes against what we have in Quebec.

Obviously, the Bloc opposes this bill, just as we opposed Bill C-268 in the last Parliament, and just as we opposed the proposed amendment to Bill C-7 when it was studied in committee. We have always been opposed to this. I do not know why it has come up a third time. Apparently, they have run out of topics, when there are so many to work on. If the Conservatives are looking for topics, we can help them with that.

Again, the Conservative Party is presenting us with a bill that has a certain objective, but which is worded differently in order to hide its real objective.

We oppose this bill for two reasons.

First of all, it contravenes the Quebec charter of values, rights and freedoms. There are already laws in place to protect health care workers in such situations involving intimidation. Let me give some examples of legislation that allows health care workers to refuse to provide medical assistance in dying.

Quebec's Act respecting end-of-life care states the following:

A physician practising in a centre operated by an institution who refuses a request for medical aid in dying for a reason not based on section 29 must, as soon as possible, notify the executive director of the institution or any other person designated by the executive director and forward the request form given to the physician, if that is the case, to the executive director or designated person. The executive director of the institution or designated person must then take the necessary steps to find, as soon as possible, another physician willing to deal with the request in accordance with section 29.

Subsection 241.2(9) of the Criminal Code states:

For greater certainty, nothing in this section compels an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying.

Health care workers are already protected by the Criminal Code.

Finally, section 24 of the Code of ethics of physicians of Quebec recognizes conscientious objection for medical practitioners, which is the right not to resort to a medical act that goes against their values. It is also recognized in Quebec's Act respecting end-of-life care. The physician is nevertheless required to find another physician.

A physician must, where his personal convictions prevent him from prescribing or providing professional services that may be appropriate, acquaint his patient with such convictions; he must also advise him of the possible consequences of not receiving such professional services. The physician must then offer to help the patient find another physician.

Ontario has a similar provision. Therefore, physicians and health care workers in that province do not need this bill.

Second, we are opposed to this bill because it allows physicians not to refer a case. Let us recall certain statistics. It is all too clear: There is a growing demand for medical assistance in dying, in Quebec as well as in Canada, since these laws were passed.

Private Members' Business

• (1725)

End-of-life care meets a need and helps ease the suffering of patients who are dying. Since the act came into force, the number of cases of MAID in Quebec has increased year over year. In 2016-17 there were 599 cases and in 2020-21 there were 2,426, which represents a 405% increase.

According to the annual report of the commission on end-of-life care, three-quarters of patients who requested MAID had cancer.

We can all agree that individuals who request MAID do not do so lightly. These people have a right to dignity and that is what is most important in all of this.

A certain balance must be struck and a decision made. That is the issue: striking a balance between an individual's dignity and freedom of conscience and religion. This has already been studied. Quebec has been discussing these issues for 10 years. That was the objective of the bill sponsored by Ms. Hivon, who I would like to congratulate today, and which was adopted on June 5, 2014. A lot of work went into this. Years were spent studying and evaluating these issues. Why not trust the work that has already been done by Quebec in this area?

This seems to be a recurring theme in the House. The federal government starts from scratch without building on what has already been done. It does not have to look far; Quebec is just across the Ottawa River.

The Quebec National Assembly is working on the issue; among other things, the Select Committee on Dying with Dignity was created on December 4, 2009. There is a consensus in Quebec that access to medical assistance in dying should not be restricted. The Quebec National Assembly spent 10 years examining both sides of the issue I just spoke about.

I will conclude here. I repeat: Medical assistance in dying is not designed to go against the values, religions or religious practices of certain Conservative Party members. Medical assistance in dying is an essential measure that allows people to die with honour and dignity. That is in line with Quebec's charter of values and its charter of rights and freedoms.

• (1730)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, this private member's bill, in my view, is an attempt to override the patient's right to access information about, and to have access to, a legally provided medical service based on the personal beliefs of the service provider.

It is not about intimidation of health care professionals. Health care professionals already have that protection. No one who objects for conscience reasons is required to participate in any medical service to which they object, but professional organizations do require service providers to provide referrals for those seeking assistance if they are unable or unwilling to provide it.

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Let me be very clear. Currently, medical professionals are permitted to opt out of providing a service if they object on moral or religious grounds. With that right, they also have an obligation to the patient and, as such, they are required to provide the patient with a referral for that service.

The Conservatives should know that the right for patients to access information and referrals for service has been tested in the courts. In fact, in January of 2018, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice upheld the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario's policy on effective referrals and the Ontario Court of Appeal confirmed that decision in May of 2019. Justice Herman Wilton-Siegel wrote in the unanimous ruling, "the evidence in the record establishes a real risk of a deprivation of equitable access to health care, particularly on the part of the more vulnerable members of our society, in the absence of the effective referral requirements of the Policies."

What we are debating here today is another attempt by the Conservatives to limit the patient's right to access medical assistance in dying. They are simply trying to create fear and division in the community and trying to find a back door to deny patients access to services. If patients cannot access services, what would that mean?

A constituent in Vancouver East wrote to me about the implication of a loved one not being able to access medically assisted dying. He was clear to say that it would just mean more pain and excruciating suffering, to the point where he said he was certain the loved one would take their own life no matter how dangerous or the means.

Is this what the Conservatives really want to do? Do they want to drive people to this point of desperation? I should hope not, yet here we are debating this bill. The effect of this bill, if passed, would mean exactly that. The impact of this bill would be particularly devastating in rural and remote communities where there are already fewer health care providers and services.

Aside from medically assisted dying, I fully expect this bill, if passed, would have other implications in other health services. It is entirely plausible that others will seek a similar exemption from providing abortion services. The potential implications for women's rights are very real as it could be used as a precedent to restrict access to family planning and abortion services. Already women in the LGBTQ2+ community are faced with barriers to access abortion and family planning services.

In Canada, there remain huge barriers to timely access to abortion services. The problem is especially acute in many of the rural, northern and remote communities. LGBTQ2+, non-binary people and migrant workers also face far too many barriers to access reproductive health care.

• (1735)

New Democrats are in full support of the community's calls to ensure access to abortion and other reproductive health care services in rural and remote regions. There must be free and universal access to contraception. The government must eliminate barriers to access for reproductive health care for marginalized groups, including undocumented people and two-spirit, transgender and non-binary people. Access to health care services is enshrined in the Canada

Health Act. Instead of finding ways to limit access, all parliamentarians should be working on finding ways to ensure access.

I should note that the special committee has actually started looking further into the issues around MAID, although that committee's work began late and with much delay. Nonetheless, that work has started, and some of the key questions that it is addressing would add to the issues around assisted dying, which has already been debated in the House. However, the bill before us, in my view, would not add to that issue. In fact, the bill is clearly trying to create division and a divide in the community. It is trying to stoke up fear where fear should not exist. Health care workers and professionals are protected. They have the opportunity to opt out. They have the right to opt out, so the bill is entirely unnecessary.

I would be remiss if I did not note the fact that the bill is back again for the second time, even though the first time it was tabled it went nowhere. I have to wonder about that, because all 338 of us in the House of Commons hold our breath after each election to see if, in the lottery draw, we would get the opportunity to table a private member's bill or motion to be debated and voted on the House. However, this member has chosen to bring back a bill that has already gone through the process and went nowhere. There are so many other urgent issues to debate, and I could rattle off a number of them.

As the immigration critic, I could talk about bringing forward policy changes by way of a bill or a motion to address the immigration situation, the immigration processing delays and the backlog that exists in our system right now. There are over two million people waiting to find out what is going to happen to their lives and unable to move forward because of immigration processing delays.

We could actually bring forward a bill to talk about the blocking of family reunification. For so many families, spousal sponsorships are being blocked because they are unable to see timely processing of their spousal sponsorship. They cannot even bring their loved ones here to Canada with a visitor permit because of section 179(b) of IRPA regulations. In fact, I have, sitting on the Order Paper that I could table any time, a bill on striking section 179(b) so that we could ensure family reunification takes place for loved ones and stop creating barriers for them to even come and visit their loved ones on a travel visa.

We could be talking about the Afghan crisis. So many Afghan interpreters and their families are in danger right now and unable to get to safety because the government has put a cap on the special immigration measure numbers for Afghans who served this country. We could also be talking about the drug poisoning crisis or the housing crisis and putting an end to the financialization of housing.

Any number of these issues are worthy of debate, but the Conservatives chose this one all because they want to stoke up fear. That is shameful.

• (1740)

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-230, the protection of freedom of conscience act. My colleague from Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has worked hard to bring this legislation forward, and I applaud her for doing so. Right off the bat, though, I do want to say that my hon. colleague and I come at these issues from opposite ends, but I thank her for encouraging me to share a different perspective on the matter.

I support a woman's right to seek an abortion, and I always will. I support Canadians having access to medical assistance in dying, and I always will. In fact, I proudly supported the legislation that made access to medical assistance in dying possible several years ago. However, I also respect that a medically assisted death is not acceptable for a large number of Canadians, especially those who hold strong religious convictions where their teachings prohibit such acts. Today I find myself standing strongly to defend those who disagree with my fundamental beliefs. If we want others to defend our rights and freedoms, we have to be willing to defend theirs.

Rights and freedoms are a two-way street. As I said in 2016, while debating MAID, this is a complex issue for which there are strong opinions on both sides. Trying to solve and encapsulate such complex emotional issues into legislation is always a challenge and it will never be perfect. As such, I strongly supported the original legislation's requirement that there be a review at the five-year mark to re-evaluate the legislation. I feel that this thorough re-evaluation has never taken place and breaks faith with the spirit of the original legislation, so I would strongly urge the Liberal government to undertake a deep review of the MAID legislation and address its shortcomings. The trust of Canadians is being put to the test and it does not have to be this way.

I have also been a very strong advocate for palliative care and will continue to be. My dear friend, Lou Winthers, who worked for me in my constituency office for many, many years, was the executive director of Rosedale Hospice in Calgary. My family and I volunteered there and saw directly the importance of palliative care. Also, my late father-in-law, David Macdonald, was the executive chef at the Rosedale Hospice in Calgary. He spent much of his long career as an executive chef in many of the prime hotels throughout the country. He spent his final years cooking for the dying in the hospice.

As many members know, I was widowed when my wife passed away from breast cancer. That journey, more than any other, showed me that palliative care is necessary and timely access to it is critical. In fact, one of the conditions on which I supported MAID was that we simultaneously and strongly support palliative care. One cannot replace the other. They are both needed. The fact is that palliative care remains grossly underfunded and access is hit-or-miss depending on where one lives and when one needs it.

Both MAID and palliative care rely on medical professionals. These professionals are people, real people, with personal beliefs, personal convictions and personal experiences. I can understand that not all medical professionals support abortion or MAID, and I support their belief that they should not be forced to perform cer-

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tain procedures that put them at odds with their conscience, their beliefs and their community. Quite frankly, I would not want to have a procedure performed on me by anyone who did not believe in what they were doing. Would it not be better to know if one's doctor or nurse was willing to put 100% effort into their work before the procedure started?

Protecting conscience rights ensures that both the patient and the medical staff are fully informed and aware of issues when giving consent. I do not need to go into detail to explain the importance of informed consent in the medical process, but I believe protections of conscience rights are an important aspect of the whole informed consent process.

The whole process of dying is deeply personal and individually unique. Sometimes, a person will have experiences with the dying that leave lasting impressions, and I feel compelled to share one here tonight.

• (1745)

On a Thursday in August 2020, a constituent, Sophia Lang, wrote to me to tell me she had been approved for MAID. She said:

You have no idea how much peace of mind that gives me: that there is a merciful way out of needless pain and suffering. I thank the Lord each day that I have that option for when life is no longer worth living.

She went on to say:

However there is a problem. One needs to have mental faculties to be able to consent at the very end. That is a reason that many people—and I may be one of them—choose to activate MAID early: for fear of being unable to consent at the end. I wish you, as my representative in parliament, to help improve the law so that advance directives are made legal. Many people would be able to live longer and at peace.

Imagine my shock when I later learned that we were having these exchanges in her last days. She died just four days after our last exchange, as I learned through the Calgary Herald obituaries. She never mentioned how close she was to leaving this world in any of our emails. I found it so powerful that when she had so little time left on this earth, she spent precious moments advocating for those who would follow in her footsteps.

Sophia has been gone for two years now, but her voice is not silent. I will continue to support access to MAID, advocate for proper advance directives and strongly call for a better palliative care system in Canada. At the same time, I will defend and speak for those who have conscience objections to these procedures.

I truly believe that as a society we must find a way to give Canadians something without taking something away from others. Protection of conscience rights does just this by ensuring lawmakers can, in good conscience, give access to certain medical procedures without unjustly compromising the existing freedoms exercised by others.

Private Members' Business

As Democrat politician and American lawyer Joe Andrew famously said, the hardest decisions in life are not between good and bad or right and wrong, but between two goods or two rights. I believe we can find a common ground on these issues, and we must. We need to find a way to make rights compatible and find a way to give something to some without taking away from others.

I call on all members of the House to support getting the bill to committee. I think this is an important conversation we need to have as a Parliament. Again, I understand that my colleague and I have fundamental disagreements on issues like MAID and abortion, but I hope we have demonstrated to our colleagues that when members do share common ground on an issue, like conscience rights, we owe it to Canadians to work together.

I would also like to say that the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is an opportunity to make Canada better. It is a moment to reflect on our failures of the past, the impact they continue to have today and how we can bring about the healing that is required. We are a nation of nations, a people of peoples, and we have an opportunity to use this occasion to better ourselves and our country.

I hope all Canadians reflect on their individual and our collective responsibilities to bring about changes that are needed. True truth and reconciliation is our shared path to a better Canada.

• (1750)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Bill C-230, presented in this House by my friend and my colleague, the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek. The bill we are debating today is worth more than a casual dismissal, as I have heard done in this debate by so many.

The bill, if supported, would provide the protections for charter rights of medical professionals who object to providing or participating in medical assistance in dying, which is something that many Canadians are concerned are not there. This is not a debate about medically assisted dying, on which my own convictions are based on a deeply held personal experience and one I would not wish on anyone in this House.

It is also insulting to hear that some members in this House think that it is exercise in politics. This is a debate that is often used in the simplification of applying a litmus test to carelessly sift people into buckets based on how they see a very complex societal issue, to which some so easily assign a check mark or an X. I also support a woman's right to choose. I always have. I always will. I support the LGBT community and its rights, and not as a check mark but as someone who is a proud member of it.

Canadians have varied opinions on MAID based on deeply held personal circumstances, beliefs and experience. One member in this House said, before opposing these important provisions in the bill, which aims to codify them in law, that he did not see the need for them.

However, I do want to reiterate and emphasize some points that are important to this conversation and should be important to members of this House and Canadians alike. Medical assistance in dying is a deeply held moral and conscientious issue that has legal and ethical questions beyond a simple difference of opinion. We know that from the debates in this House. The medical professionals have

a duty to do what is in the best interests of their patients and provide them with the best advice on how to move forward with their care. I will say that this is personal and I will say that I went through it. In this case of medical assistance in dying, there are professional and ethical considerations that should be weighed with the highest degree of importance and a caution that touches on the deep moral convictions that I do not believe have been adequately addressed in the current context of our laws.

That said, this bill aims to add two new offences to the Criminal Code. It does not pronounce on whether conscience-rights protections are somehow up for debate. They are not, despite some members' suggesting that this bill would aim to do things that it would not do.

I do believe that it is important to state, for my colleague and those before her who brought this to the House in a piece of legislation, what it actually says and not fall into an issue that we are not debating today. One, the bill would make it an offence to intimidate a medical practitioner for the purpose of compelling them to take part directly or indirectly in the provision of medical assistance in dying. Two, it also would make it an offence to dismiss or refuse to employ the medical practitioner on that same basis. The debate suggests that the provisions in the Criminal Code already do this, and that is simply not the case.

While the Criminal Code does not compel a medical professional to provide MAID, there is nothing in the Criminal Code that specifically protects medical professionals when they are pressured or coerced into participating in or advising on medical assistance in dying.

Not wanting to discuss this does not make the conversation go away. The bill is a direct response to disability rights groups and groups who are calling for these provisions and who understand first-hand that it is a problem. This bill is a direct response to the first nations groups who have called for this and understand that it is a problem. This bill is a direct response to legal experts. It is a response to mental health professionals who understand that this is a problem. Therefore, saying that it is not a problem does not make it not a problem.

This bill would make certain that medical professionals who choose not to take part in or to refer a patient for assisted suicide or medical assistance in dying would never be forced or coerced to violate their charter rights.

• (1755)

The Ontario Medical Association specifically called for an amendment like this in the bill passed by the government, to provide greater conscience protections for medical professionals, acknowledging that although the current clause in the government's bill, "for greater certainty", exists, it does not actually do the thing it is supposed to do, which is protect freedom. It cannot be enforced. That is the problem that this bill, which was brought to this floor for debate by my colleague, would correct.

This bill addresses the gap and would close it by establishing two spelled-out and very targeted offences. Stakeholders are calling on those additional safeguards, and any discussion of answering this call should not be callously dismissed. It should be thoughtfully considered on behalf of all Canadians, and certainly those who have asked for provisions like this.

Members opposite have stated throughout the debate a jurisdictional argument, and that it somehow infringes on provincial jurisdiction. It is hard to see it as anything but political when one argues that conscience rights legislation somehow interferes with jurisdiction while simultaneously believing that the legalization of medical assistance in dying does not do the same thing.

To go back to the code for a second and the notion that existing provisions in the Criminal Code already produce satisfactory protections, if that were the case, this bill would not be necessary. However, I believe that notion ought to be challenged, because it is simply not the case. The evidence from those affected should trump the dismissal of evidence from politicians claiming it to be trivial, or worse, not even acknowledged.

This bill would do just as much to protect patients as it does medical professionals, which is something that has not been talked about, by protecting the fundamentally important relationship between a physician and a patient. It would do so by ensuring the advice their physician is providing is free and clear of coercion. That should be a priority, not a land mine we cannot discuss. We should have these discussions here, because they are important and the provisions do not exist as they currently talk about in the code.

There have been laws that created unintended consequences of doctors being forced to participate in providing a patient's death, regardless of whether they believed it was in the patient's best interest or not. The current provisions cannot possibly claim that the Criminal Code already protects the conscience rights of medical professionals, not if one reads the code. The clause I mention confirms only that the Criminal Code is not the source of obligation to participate. It does not state it as an offence. It must actually articulate it as an offence in order for people to effectively deal with it as an offence and in order to enforce it. That is what we are talking about.

Without conscience rights, doctors are constrained to provide medical assistance in dying, regardless of whether it is their professional opinion or is in the best interest of the patient, regardless of their moral, ethical and personal convictions and regardless of their own beliefs. Without the necessary protections, they may be coerced and they may be intimidated, and those rights would have no value as a result.

Private Members' Business

Many of us today might be or might have been in a situation where a loved one has a difficult choice to make about their health. Why would we not want our loved ones to receive the best possible care, the most options and the best options from good doctors, based on advice that has not been coloured by possible intimidation?

Over the past years, we have seen just how much Canadians depend on our health care system and how crucial doctors and medical professionals who work in that system have been. Every Canadian has, or at least a number of Canadians have experienced or are experiencing now how important the system is, and making sure that system works is even more important.

We need to create a work environment for medical professionals that protects them, supports them, encourages them and attracts the most qualified people possible to the profession. I encourage members in this House to support the passage of this protection of freedom of conscience act. I hope those with deeply held conviction will understand what my hon. colleague is trying to achieve for patients, doctors and those wanting to see them protected.

• (1800)

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to close the debate on my bill, the protection of freedom of conscience act.

I believe this is a straightforward piece of legislation. It would make it an offence to intimidate a medical professional to participate in medically assisted suicide, directly or indirectly, or to dismiss from employment or refuse to hire a medical professional simply because they refuse to take part in medically assisted dying.

With the removal of safeguards, the slippery slope that many predicted when medically assisted suicide was decriminalized has come to fruition. Additionally, the courts and government legislation have expanded medically assisted suicide far beyond what was conceived in the Carter decision of 2015. Now, those who promote euthanasia support medically assisted suicide for the mentally ill, with some even believing that children should be eligible. This is creating turbulent and stressful times for many in the medical field.

Given this expansion of medical assistance in dying, there is the growing concern or objection among many medical professionals, whether they support MAID or disagree with it, that they may be forced to participate, even if they do not believe that it is in a particular patient's best interest based on their expertise and knowledge of the patient's history. More and more are becoming aware of the erosion of respect for their professional judgment and the precious relationship between the health care provider and their patient.

Unlike what some are trying to portray, this bill does not relitigate the legality of MAID, nor does it seek to impede a patient's access to MAID. Rather, it seeks to protect a medical professional's charter right not to participate in medically assisted suicide when they cannot in good conscience do so.

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Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms specifically says:

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

(a) freedom of conscience and religion;

During the first hour of debate, my colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, reminded us that the Supreme Court's ruling in the Carter decision was predicated on two things: “a willing patient and, as importantly, a willing physician.” He went on to note that in the decision, the Supreme Court stated the following: “we note...that a physician’s decision to participate in assisted dying is a matter of conscience and, in some cases, of religious belief”.

Protecting individuals from coercion of this nature is not foreign to the Criminal Code of Canada, as found in section 425. If Parliament can enshrine criminal penalties for employers for coercing employees not to form a union, then surely we can provide similar protection for medical professionals when dealing with conscience protections.

Throughout the pandemic, we saw just how important every doctor, nurse and medical support worker is to our system. I do not want even one of these amazing men and women to leave Canada or leave the profession because they are faced with a situation of having one of their most precious rights violated.

With Bill C-230, I have put forward comprehensive yet simple legislation that is important to medical professionals from coast to coast. I would welcome a committee's examination of it, as well as any recommendations to improve it.

In closing, it is an honour to have introduced a private member's bill of substance and consequence in this place and to have members debate it. I humbly ask all members to vote in favour of it at second reading so that it can be sent to committee for further study.

• (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

If a member of a recognized party in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be carried on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to an order made Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, on May 5, I rose to ask the Prime Minister if he would take immediate action to deliver a dedicated housing strategy for indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people and end the ongoing genocide against indigenous women and girls.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls cites housing and homelessness over 200 times. This is the result of colonization and decades of neglect and broken promises by successive federal governments, from Liberals to Conservatives to Liberals.

Precarious housing situations contribute to increased risk of violence, trafficking and the high number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Urban indigenous peoples are eight times more likely to experience homelessness compared with the general population. The national inquiry's final report calls upon governments to ensure that indigenous peoples have equitable access to basic rights, including housing, but the current government has failed to deliver a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy.

The Prime Minister has said over and over again, “No relationship is more important to Canada than the relationship with Indigenous Peoples,” but reconciliation must be more than just words. It requires real action, commitment, listening to indigenous peoples and substantial investments. In other words, it requires action.

The Prime Minister's words ring hollow when indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people in Canada continue to disproportionately experience violence and homelessness. The \$300 million over five years for the for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy is woefully inadequate to address the urgent needs on the ground. After decades of neglect and colonization, it is a slap in the face to indigenous peoples. Ensuring access to safe, affordable and culturally appropriate housing is critical to ending this genocide against indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

Call to justice 4.6 calls upon the government to “immediately commence the construction of new housing and the provision of repairs for existing housing to meet the housing needs of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.”

Call to justice 4.7 calls upon the government to:

...support the establishment and long-term sustainable funding of Indigenous-led low-barrier shelters, safe spaces, transition homes, second-stage housing, and services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people who are homeless, near homeless, dealing with food insecurity, or in poverty, and who are fleeing violence or have been subjected to sexualized violence and exploitation. All governments must ensure that shelters, transitional housing, second-stage housing, and services are appropriate to cultural needs, and available wherever Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people reside.

Tomorrow is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Our country must reflect on our history of colonial violence and genocide. The government has a responsibility to end this violence and to stop perpetuating this colonial violence, this intergenerational trauma and this social and economic marginalization. We need action now.

• (1810)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for bringing up this important topic. I would also like to assure the member that the government has taken the tragic loss of indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people extremely seriously.

While budget 2021 investments continue to roll out, budget 2022 builds on these past investments to strike at the root causes and work towards eliminating violence against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and to address the calls for justice.

This is a holistic approach, and this would help to build safer communities. We are investing in housing, education, mental wellness and health care, as well as economic development and employment; addressing the challenges of natural resource development and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and investing in the gender-based violence national action plan, the LGTBQ2+ federal action plan and the anti-racism plan.

To say that we have not taken action is not true. It is simply not true. For example, in July of this year, in collaboration with the Government of Nova Scotia, indigenous communities and organizations, our government invested over \$6.5 million to support the construction of a new resilience centre in Milbrook through the green and inclusive community buildings program. This centre would provide services to women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals seeking refuge and respite across Nova Scotia.

In regards to homelessness, the government recognizes that precarious housing conditions put indigenous women and girls, as well as 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at higher risks of violence. We worked with partners to co-develop the 10-year national first nations housing and related infrastructure strategy. The Assembly of First Nations Chief endorsed that strategy in December of 2018. We continue to work with the Assembly of First Nations to advance this strategy.

As of December 31, 2021, our government has supported first nations with the construction, renovation and retrofitting of 25,102 homes on reserve, of which 17,432 have been completed. To support housing in Inuit and Métis communities, \$980 million has been announced by our government since 2016.

In the 2022 budget, we announced an additional \$4 billion in funding for indigenous housing over seven years to accelerate work in closing indigenous housing gaps, including \$2.4 billion over five years to support first nations housing on reserve, \$845 million over seven years for housing in Inuit communities, \$190 million over seven years for housing in Métis communities, and \$565 million over five years for housing in self-governing and modern treaty first nation communities.

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Lastly, through the indigenous homes innovation initiative, we are supporting creative projects led by indigenous peoples to design and build more effective, sustainable and culturally inspired living spaces, some of which will specifically support indigenous women and girls or other vulnerable populations.

• (1815)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Chair, the government needs to face the truth and acknowledge the reality of the ongoing genocide of indigenous women and girls in this country.

One in 10 indigenous women were victims of a violent crime in 2019, and between 2015 and 2020, the average homicide rate involving indigenous victims was six times higher than that of non-indigenous people.

A 22-year-old Inuit woman, Savanna Pikuyak, who came to Ottawa to become a nurse, was murdered just four days after arriving in the city. She lacked access to safe, secure, affordable housing. That is the reality. She was away from her home community.

We still do not have a for indigenous, by indigenous urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Will the government commit today, on the eve of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to adequately fund a for indigenous, by indigenous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I will reiterate that this government takes the safety and well-being of indigenous women and girls, as well as 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, very seriously. We are working hard with our partners, listening to indigenous voices and creating legislation and programming across the country. The goal is to build a safer, more inclusive and culturally sensitive Canada that will help reduce violence against vulnerable groups.

This is complicated work, and I understand that the hon. member is eager to see tangible actions. However, I can assure the member that we are making important progress because of the changes that we and our partners are introducing. We are building a safer society for all Canadians.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, several months ago, I asked the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and other ministers if they had met with impacted communities regarding their concerns with the Nunavut Impact Review Board's recommendations on Baffinland's phase two proposal. The minister's response was, "I can assure the member...that the consideration of indigenous people and the people of the north, Inuit, will be taken into great consideration".

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After the Nunavut Impact Review Board recommended the rejection of phase two, Baffinland immediately requested a temporary increase to ship six million tonnes of iron ore. Communities had repeatedly told NIRB that the current project is already having devastating impacts on the wildlife and environment. These voices are being ignored.

The ministers must hear directly from these communities regarding the Mary River project. Even though experts have testified and the communities have spoken, these testimonies have been ignored directly by the ministers in the government.

It is my understanding that for each hearing, five impacted communities were allowed to bring five people to represent themselves. Throughout the hearings, only a small number of people were invited to testify. Those five communities are made up of 6,897 people, which is less than 1% of the populations that call the communities of Pond Inlet, Clyde River, Arctic Bay, Igloolik and Sanirajak their home. By putting limits on the voices heard, the deep, meaningful consultation required is not being done.

The legal requirements for the duty to consult require the government to accommodate indigenous peoples when there is a potential for impacts from resource development. Corporate greed of private business should not come before the rights of indigenous peoples.

The government continues to fail to protect indigenous people's right to be consulted. By deferring responsibility to NIRB, it has failed to meet its legal obligation to ensure meaningful and deep consultation.

Ministers have been refusing to meet with community members, including those from the Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Organization. Their culture and ability to thrive in Nunavut is a right affirmed in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. The government continues to infringe on their rights.

Like many things it has promised indigenous peoples, their rights are being violated. Has the minister and his colleagues met directly, not through NIRB's process or Baffinland, with these communities over their concerns with the duty to consult?

• (1820)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her continued advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

As the member knows, on May 13, the independent, arm's length Nunavut Impact Review Board submitted its report on the Baffinland Iron Mines' Mary River phase two project. We thank it for its important work and all northern and indigenous partners for their participation in the NIRB process.

Last July, the government extended the timeline to issue a decision in collaboration with project proponents and northern and indigenous partners. No decision has been made at this time. We will take the time to review the report along with federal officials. A decision will be taken following appropriate due diligence and comprehensive analysis, including whether the duty to consult has been met or not.

I note that prior to the Nunavut Impact Review Board's recommendation, the Minister of Northern Affairs travelled to Pond Inlet,

Nunavut, in August of 2021 and met with the community project proponents QIA and Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Organization. Furthermore, since 2018, the department, through the northern participant funding program, has approved financial support to 13 organizations involved in the phase two review, with a total funding amount of \$2,089,452. This funding has helped ensure the meaningful participation of north Baffin Inuit and other interested parties in the phase two review process.

It is important to consider that there is currently a comprehensive review taking place by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, working with partners to understand the recommendation by NIRB and to assess the duty to consult. During the decision phase, parties wanting to share their opinions on the board's recommendation should contact the president of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency.

Creating employment opportunities through sustainable economic development to benefit Nunavummiut and all Canadians continues to be a priority for this government. That is why our federal budgets include strong measures and create investments to support the economy in the north and strengthen Arctic and northern communities. Building on past budget investments, budget 2022 proposes to provide \$15 million over five years, starting in 2022-23, to support indigenous economic development in the north. I know that the minister works closely with territorial and Inuit partners and all communities in Nunavut to make sure that their interests are protected.

It is imperative that indigenous peoples are full partners in natural resource projects. We work to strengthen the Inuit-Crown partnership through meaningful collaboration while creating a more prosperous Inuit Nunangat. Our efforts are guided by the values and principles of the Inuit Nunangat policy.

I remind the hon. member that the Government of Canada remains committed to protecting the interests of all Nunavummiut and we will do this in the spirit of reconciliation, guided by the Inuit Nunangat policy.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, the parliamentary secretary has not answered my question about whether the ministers have met directly with the impacted communities.

When I was trying to arrange meetings with the ministers and my communities, I was frequently told by the ministers that they were concerned about the conflict of interest relating to the Mary River project, explaining why they could not meet directly with the communities.

Could the parliamentary secretary please share the conflict of interest he or his party has? I am sure that the people in my riding would be interested to hear if their interests are being ignored over corporate greed.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, our government has been following the process as prescribed by the Nunavut agreement, co-developed with Inuit partners. This process provides certainty for all of those involved.

Our government supports a strong resource development sector in the north that is sustainable, creates economic opportunity for indigenous peoples and all northerners, advances reconciliation and respects the environment. The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency continues to do its due diligence and comprehensive analysis of the recommendation on whether the duty to consult has in fact been met. Once the government receives this report, the minister will take the necessary time to review and make a decision within the legislated timeline.

I again thank the member for her continued advocacy on this important issue.

• (1825)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will begin my remarks by recognizing the freedom-loving, independent-minded and hard-working people who live in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Never has the threat to democracy in Canada been more in jeopardy than it is with our Prime Minister, who is quick to accuse others of being racist while he enjoys dressing up in costumes and blackface to make fun of other people's cultures and skin colours.

My question to the Prime Minister was specifically related to the amount of \$15 billion in the national defence budget that was unaccounted for. The 2022 departmental plan indicates its intent to spend \$77 billion between 2022-23 and 2024-25. However, the corresponding numbers in budget 2022 are roughly \$23 billion higher. While part of this spending pertains to new policy measures presented in budget 2022, there is no explanation for close to \$15 billion.

Surely by coincidence, the Canada growth fund was announced as something in the budget document that would be "initially capitalized at \$15 billion over the next five years" from the existing fiscal framework. The only \$15 billion parliamentarians are aware of unaccounted for in the budget to be misappropriated is the missing \$15 billion identified by the non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer.

The objective of the Canada growth fund, Canadians are told, is to close the large gap between what Canada is experiencing between the public and private capital now being spent each year, \$15 billion to \$25 billion, and the amount that is required to be siphoned from the economy, \$125 billion to \$140 billion, if Canada is to have a net-zero Marxist economy by 2050. This same language was used recently by the defence minister when it was announced that continental defence modernization needs \$3 billion from, once again, existing budget 2022 allocations. No new funding was an-

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nounced for this finally acknowledged threat to Canada and the rules-based international order.

The more sanctions Canada employs against Russia, the more we draw Russia's attention to our borders. Canada's Arctic sovereignty is at risk. The government House leader, using the usual mannered, evasive response to questions practised by the Prime Minister to irritating extremes, ignores the fact that it was the decision of the Liberal Party to disband, during the decade of darkness at national defence, Canada's rapid response light brigade. Its role was to defend Canadian Arctic sovereignty.

When Canada lost the capabilities of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, the Liberal Party was in effect inviting other countries, such as China, to take over Canada's far north. The fact our Arctic sovereignty is at risk was recently recognized by NATO. It is about time the federal government recognized the risk in Canada's far north. Talk is rarely replaced by the government with action. They over-promise and underperform. It will take a Conservative government to get boots on the ground.

Let us not forget the commitments to Ukraine, which look nice when they are delivered, but come at the detriment to our capabilities. Since the start of the war in Ukraine, Canada has sent approximately \$394 million U.S. in additional military aid from the Canadian military's stock of weapons deemed available for donation, which is now largely depleted and will need to be replaced.

Canada's United Nations standing is diminishing, as evidenced in our lost bid to Ireland in 2020 for a rotating seat on the UN Security Council. We were not invited to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the soon-to-be largest free trade area in the world, nor were we asked to join the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom in AUKUS, a new defence pact aimed at containing the growing military might of China.

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every day, Canada and our allies count on the Canadian Armed Forces to safeguard our citizens and uphold the rules-based international order that underpins global security and prosperity. As parliamentarians, we need to ensure that the talented professionals of our defence team have the resources they need to keep pace in an increasingly complex threat environment.

Here at home and across the globe, we are seeing the results of a great power competition; the effects of the pandemic on the recruitment, retention and readiness of the CAF members; and the role that climate change plays on defence and security, including in our Arctic region. We need to account for these issues and make sure that we are staying one step ahead if we are to remain strong at home, secure in North America and engaged in the world. Therefore, it is for good reason the Department of National Defence has one of the largest operating and capital budgets in government.

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Budget 2022 contains a variety of new investments for our military. We have added \$8 billion in new funding on top of funding already forecasted in the departmental plan and in Canada's defence policy, which, as members know, we will be updating to better reflect the evolving security environment.

The hon. member referenced in her original question a recent analysis the Parliamentary Budget Officer released in budget 2022. In the analysis, the PBO commented on the difference between the forecast of the defence spending in a graph in budget 2022 and the forecast in National Defence's most recent departmental plan. However, the budget and the departmental plan are separate documents with two different ways of presenting future spending. This approach is consistent across all departments as part of the expenditure reporting cycle to Parliament. In fact, the \$15-billion difference suggested by the member opposite is not a discrepancy at all.

Federal budget 2022 outlined forecasted spending and the departmental plans outline what has been approved at any given time by the Treasury Board and Parliament. As a result, the National Defence departmental plan reflects only capital spending that has been fully approved through the Treasury Board's submission process at the time the report is prepared. The budget, on the other hand, contains future spending not yet approved by Treasury Board, hence the difference in the estimated numbers.

For large departments like DND, this difference appears exaggerated because we only access the money when we need it. In this particular case, the difference is mainly composed of forecasted capital spending and expenses related to military operations. More precisely, the largest difference between the estimated DND planned spending in the budget graph versus the departmental plan is the major SSE capital projects for which DND has not yet sought Treasury Board or parliamentary approvals for the associated supply, which means the associated funding is not in DND's reference levels.

As for CAF operations, the associated incremental funding is only assessed in-year and thus not reflected as planned spending in DND's departmental plan. That would include Operation Impact, Operation Reassurance, Operation Unifier, Operation Artemis and peace support operations.

Canadians can rest assured that the department is committed to responsible stewardship and transparent spending as we work to keep Canadians safe here at home and protect and promote Canadian interests around the world.

• (1830)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, on June 14, the finance minister, during testimony before the statutory committee struck to investigate the declaration of the Emergencies Act, stated her concern for the diminished standing of Canada's international reputation. Canada continues to suffer irreparable harm to our international reputation as a result of invoking the Emergencies Act in the absence of any clear and compelling reason to do so.

It gives me no comfort to report to Canadians the Prime Minister's nickname in the European capitals he hides in these days is the "Gropenführer", which is an obvious reference to the Kokanee grope scandal and how the Prime Minister mistreats female journalists and dismisses them because they are women.

Canada risks surrendering our nationhood as we become more and more isolated from those who can help us most when we need it.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, we continue making significant progress implementing SSE and making the investments we need to keep Canada strong and safe. Projects like our new fleet of 88 future fighters, our Arctic and offshore patrol ships and our armoured combat support vehicles are all coming to fruition.

We have been able to keep advancing initiatives even through two and a half years of global pandemic. That is because one of the defining features of our defence policy is its flexible funding model. It allows us to effectively manage our operating and capital budgets by adjusting in evolving circumstances. In fact, DND only asks for funding that can be reasonably spent in that given year and can reprofile unspent capital funds to future years.

The member opposite and all Canadians can feel confident knowing that we will continue to invest wisely and responsibly in the Canadian Armed Forces and in the safety and security of our country and its allies.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(1) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

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